

Saint Louis de Montfort Collection



THE SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT COLLECTION

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

INDEX

THE SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT COLLECTION: 7 BOOKS

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY: WITH PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION

THE SECRET OF MARY

THE DE MONTFORT WAY OF TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY: AN EXPLANATION

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

THE LOVE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

A LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

APOSTLE OF MARY SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

ENDNOTES

THE SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT
COLLECTION

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

INDEX

St. Louis Marie Grignon de la Bacheleraie, who abandoned his family name for that of his birthplace, was born on January 31, 1673 in the little town of Montfort-la-Canne, which is located in Brittany, France. He studied for the priesthood at St. Sulpice in Paris, having made the 200-mile journey there on foot. He was ordained a priest in 1700, at the age of 27.

St. Louis De Montfort had wanted to become a missionary in Canada, but he was advised to remain in France. . There he traveled around the western part of the country, from diocese to diocese and from parish to parish, instructing the people, preaching, helping the poor, hearing confessions, giving retreats, opening schools and rebuilding church buildings. His labors were almost miraculously fruitful. He stated that never did a sinner resist after being touched by him with a Rosary.

But because he encountered great opposition from religious authorities—in particular, being forbidden by the Bishop of Poitiers to preach in his diocese—he decided to travel to Rome to ask the Holy Father if he was doing God’s Will and whether he should continue as before. St. Louis De Montfort walked to Rome—a thousand miles—and put his case to Pope Clement XI. The Pope told him to continue his traveling missionary work and named him Missionary Apostolic, but told him always to be sure to work under obedience to the diocesan authorities.

One of St. Louis De Montfort’s greatest problems was the opposition he encountered from propagators of the Jansenist .heresy, which was then very active in France. The Jansenists spread an atmosphere of harshness and moral rigorism, claiming that human nature was radically corrupted by

Original Sin . The Jansenists denied that God's mercy is available to all, and they allowed only infrequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and only after long and severe preparation—with Holy Communion being looked upon as a reward rather than a remedy. Also, they taught that God should always be addressed with fear and trembling. These tenets resembled those of Calvinism.

Although Jansenism had been condemned by the Church twice even before St. Louis De Montfort's birth, its teachings continued to spread and to influence people for a century. In contrast, St. Louis De Montfort preached confidence in Mary and union with her Divine Son.

St. Louis De Montfort founded two religious orders: the Daughters of Wisdom, begun in 1703 from a number of poor and afflicted girls at the Hospital of Poitiers, where he was temporary chaplain, and the Missionaries of the Company of Mary , founded in 1715. The Brothers of St. Gabriel, a teaching order, also claim St. Louis De Montfort as their spiritual father.

St. Louis De Montfort left several writings, the most famous being *The Secret of the Rosary*, *True Devotion to Mary*, and *The Secret of Mary*. These books were based on sermons he had given when traveling around France. By spreading devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Louis De Montfort was teaching souls to love the devil's great enemy. At the Saint's beatification investigation, many witnesses testified that during his life they had heard struggles between him and the devil, including the sound of fist blows and the swish of whips.

St. Louis De Montfort exhausted his great physical strength by his apostolic labors. On his death-bed in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre, at age 43, he kissed the Crucifix and a statue of the Blessed Mother. Apparently speaking to the devil, he exclaimed: "In vain do you attack me; I am between Jesus and Mary! I have finished my course: All is over. I shall sin no more!" Then he died peacefully on April 28, 1716. His feast day is April 28, the day of his birth in Heaven. St. Louis De Montfort's writings were examined by the Holy See, which pronounced that there was nothing in them to hinder his beatification and canonization. He was canonized in 1947.

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

WITH PREPARATION FOR
TOTAL CONSECRATION

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH BY
REVEREND FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER D.D.

CONTENTS

INDEX

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY: WITH PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION

CONTENTS

COMMENDATIONS OF THE POPES

INFORMATION

ABOUT TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

ABOUT SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

PREFACE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION

INTRODUCTION

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

PART I

ON DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY IN GENERAL

I. EXCELLENCE AND NECESSITY OF DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY

II. DISCERNMENT OF THE TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY FIVE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS PRESUPPOSED

FIRST TRUTH

SECOND TRUTH

THIRD TRUTH

FOURTH TRUTH

FIFTH TRUTH

1. ON FALSE DEVOTIONS TO OUR LADY

2. ON THE CHARACTERS OF TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY

PART II

ON THE MOST EXCELLENT DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY, OR THE PERFECT
CONSECRATION TO JESUS BY MARY

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF HONOURING OUR
BLESSED LADY

I. IN WHAT CONSISTS THE PERFECT CONSECRATION TO JESUS CHRIST BY MARY

II. THE MOTIVES OF THIS PERFECT CONSECRATION

FIRST MOTIVE

SECOND MOTIVE

THIRD MOTIVE

FOURTH MOTIVE

FIFTH MOTIVE

SIXTH MOTIVE

SEVENTH MOTIVE

EIGHTH MOTIVE

FIGURE OF THIS CONSECRATION IN THE HISTORY OF JACOB RECEIVING THE
BLESSING OF ISAAC THROUGH THE OFFICES OF REBECCA

III. THE WONDERFUL EFFECTS WHICH THIS DEVOTION PRODUCES IN THE SOUL
WHICH IS FAITHFUL TO IT

IV. PARTICULAR PRACTICES OF THIS DEVOTION

1. EXTERNAL PRACTICES

FIRST PRACTICE

SECOND PRACTICE

THIRD PRACTICE

FOURTH PRACTICE

FIFTH PRACTICE

SIXTH PRACTICE

SEVENTH PRACTICE

2. PARTICULAR AND INTERIOR PRACTICES FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO BE PERFECT

MANNER OF PRACTISING THIS DEVOTION TO OUR LADY, WHEN WE GO TO HOLY COMMUNION

1. BEFORE COMMUNION

2. AT COMMUNION

3. AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

33-DAY PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION TO MARY

INITIAL 12-DAY PREPARATION

EMPTYING YOURSELF OF THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

DAY 8

DAY 9

DAY 10

DAY 11

DAY 12

WEEK ONE

OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF YOURSELF

DAY 13

DAY 14

[DAY 15](#)

[DAY 16](#)

[DAY 17](#)

[DAY 18](#)

[DAY 19](#)

[WEEK TWO](#)

[OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN](#)

[DAY 20](#)

[DAY 21](#)

[DAY 22](#)

[DAY 23](#)

[DAY 24](#)

[DAY 25](#)

[DAY 26](#)

[WEEK THREE](#)

[OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST](#)

[DAY 27](#)

[DAY 28](#)

[DAY 29](#)

[DAY 30](#)

[DAY 31](#)

[DAY 32](#)

[DAY 33](#)

[HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONSECRATION](#)

[CONSECRATION OF OURSELVES TO JESUS CHRIST, THE INCARNATE WISDOM, BY THE HANDS OF MARY](#)

[PRAYERS](#)

[VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS](#)

[AVE MARIS STELLA](#)

[MAGNIFICAT](#)

[GLORY BE](#)

[PRAY THE ROSARY](#)

[LITANY OF THE HOLY GHOST](#)

[LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY \(LITANY OF LORETO\)](#)

[LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS](#)

[ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT'S PRAYER TO MARY](#)

[ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT'S PRAYER TO JESUS](#)

[O JESUS LIVING IN MARY](#)

COMMENDATIONS OF THE POPES

Blessed Pope Pius IX (1846–78): Declared that Saint Louis De Montfort’s devotion to Mary was the best and most acceptable form of devotion to Our Lady.

Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903): Granted a Plenary Indulgence to those who make Saint Louis De Montfort’s act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin. On his deathbed he renewed the act himself and invoked the heavenly aid of Saint Louis De Montfort, whom he had beatified in 1888.

Pope Saint Pius X (1903–14): “I heartily recommend True Devotion to The Blessed Virgin, so admirably written by [Saint] De Montfort, and to all who read it grant the Apostolic Benediction.” . . . “There is no surer or easier way than Mary in uniting all men with Christ.”

Pope Benedict XV (1914–22): “A book of high authority and unction.”

Pope Pius XI (1922–39): “I have practiced this devotion ever since my youth.”

Pope Pius XII (1939–58): “God Alone was everything to him. Remain faithful to the precious heritage, which this great saint left you. It is a glorious inheritance, worthy, that you continue to sacrifice your strength and your life, as you have done until today.”

Pope Paul VI (1963–78): “We are convinced without any doubt that devotion to Our Lady is essentially joined with devotion to Christ, that it assures a firmness of conviction to faith in Him and in His Church, a vital adherence to Him and to His Church which, without devotion to Mary, would be impoverished and compromised.”

Blessed Pope John Paul II (1978–2005): “The reading of this book was a decisive turning-point in my life. I say ‘turning-point,’ but in fact it was a long inner journey . . . This ‘perfect devotion’ is indispensable to anyone who means to give himself without reserve to Christ and to the work of redemption.” . . . “It is from Montfort that I have taken my motto: ‘Totus tuus’ (‘I am all thine’). Someday I’ll have to tell you Montfortians how I discovered De Montfort’s Treatise on True Devotion to Mary, and how often I had to reread it to understand it.”

Vatican Council II (1962–1965): “The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. All her saving influence on men originates not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it.” . . . “The practices and exercises of devotion to her recommended by the Church in the course of the centuries [are to] be treasured.” (Lumen Gentium: 60, 67).

INFORMATION

ABOUT TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

This unique version includes two books in one. The original and best ‘True Devotion to Mary,’ has been translated from French by Father Faber, and a 33-Day ‘Preparation for Total Consecration’ along with Scripture Readings and Prayers. This version of True Devotion to Mary has the original Latin along with the English, and uses the numbered paragraph format. It also includes paintings by a famous 16th century artist, Bartolome Esteban Murillo.

A Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin or True Devotion to Mary is considered the greatest book on the Blessed Virgin Mary ever written and has been recommended and practiced by eight Popes. This is the original ‘scrupulously faithful’ translation by Father Frederick William Faber. The great Marian Pope, Blessed Pope John Paul II practised this Devotion to Mary, in his Letter to the Montfort Fathers he says:

“A work destined to become a classic of Marian spirituality was published 160 years ago. St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort wrote the Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin at the beginning of the 1700s, but the manuscript remained practically unknown for more than a century. When, almost by chance, it was at last discovered in 1842 and published in 1843, the work was an instant success, proving extraordinarily effective in spreading the “true devotion” to the Most Holy Virgin. I myself, in the years of my youth, found reading this book a great help. There I found the answers to my questions, for at one point I had feared that if my devotion to Mary became too great, it might end up compromising the supremacy of the worship owed to Christ. Under the wise guidance of St. Louis Marie, I realized that if one lives the mystery of Mary in Christ this risk does not exist. In fact, this Saint’s Mariological thought is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and in the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God.”

“My motto; ‘Totus Tuus’ is inspired by the teaching of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. These two words express total belonging to Jesus through Mary: ‘Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt,’ St Louis Marie wrote, and he translates his words: ‘I am all yours, and all that I have is yours, O most loving Jesus, through Mary, your most holy Mother’ (Treatise on True Devotion, n. 233). This Saint’s teaching has had a profound influence on the Marian devotion of many of the faithful and on my own life. It is a lived teaching of outstanding ascetic and mystical depth, expressed in a lively and passionate style that makes frequent use of images and symbols.”

“All our perfection,” St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort writes, “consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ; and therefore, the most perfect of all devotions is, without any doubt, that which most perfectly conforms, unites and consecrates us to Jesus Christ. Now, Mary being the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms the soul to Our Lord is devotion to his holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more it is consecrated to Jesus (Treatise on True Devotion, n. 120).”

“When we praise her, love her, honour her or give anything to her, it is God who is praised, God who is loved, God who is glorified, and it is to God that we give, through Mary and in Mary (Treatise on True Devotion, n. 225).”

ABOUT SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

Saint Louis-Marie Grignon De Montfort was a Catholic Priest and a Missionary. He ministered in the regions of Brittany and Vendee, France. He was born in Montfort-sur-Meu in 1673 and died in 1716. He was canonized by Pius XII in 1947. His feast day is on April 28th. He is considered one of the early proponents of the field of Mariology as it is known today, and a candidate to become a Doctor of the Church.

From his childhood, he was indefatigably devoted to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and, at the age of twelve, he was sent to Jesuit College in Rennes, as a day pupil. He never failed to visit the church before and after class. He joined a society of young men, who during their holidays ministered to the poor, and to the incurables in the hospitals, and read for them edifying books during their meals. At the age of nineteen, he went on foot to Paris to follow a theology course. On the way to Paris, he gave away all his money to the poor, exchanged clothing with them, and made a vow to subsist, thenceforth only on alms. He was ordained priest at the age of twenty-seven, and for some time fulfilled the duties of chaplain in a hospital. In 1705, when he was thirty-two, he found his true vocation, and thereafter devoted himself to preaching to the people. Over seventeen years he preached the Gospel in countless towns and villages. As an orator he was highly gifted, his language being simple was replete with fire and divine love. His whole life was conspicuous for virtues difficult for modern degeneracy to comprehend: constant prayer, love of the poor, poverty carried to an unheard-of degree, joy in humiliations and persecutions.

The following two situations will illustrate his success. He once ministered to the soldiers from the garrison at La Rochelle, moved by his words, the men wept, and cried aloud for the forgiveness of their sins. In the procession, which ended the sermon, an officer at the front, walked

barefooted and carrying a banner, and the soldiers, also barefooted, followed, carrying in one hand a crucifix, in the other a rosary, and singing hymns.

Saint Louis De Montfort's extraordinary influence was especially apparent in the matter of the Calvary at Pont château. When he announced his determination of building a monumental Calvary on a neighbouring hill, the idea was enthusiastically received by the inhabitants. For fifteen months, between two and four hundred peasants worked daily without recompense, and the task had just been completed, when the king commanded that the whole should be demolished, and the land restored to its former condition. The Jansenists, a heretical sect had convinced the Governor of Brittany that a fortress capable of affording aid to persons in revolt was being erected, and for several months' five hundred peasants, watched by a company of soldiers, were compelled to carry out the work of destruction. Father de Montfort was not disturbed on receiving this humiliating news, exclaiming only: "Blessed be God!"

This was by no means the only trial to which Grignon was subjected to. It often happened that the Jansenists, irritated by his success, secure their intrigues, by banishing him from the district, in which he was giving a mission. At La Rochelle some wretches put poison into his cup of broth, and, despite the antidote which he swallowed, his health was always impaired. On another occasion, some malefactors hid in a narrow street with the intention of assassinating him, but he had a presentiment of danger and escaped by going down another street. A year before his death, Father de Montfort founded two congregations—the Sisters of Wisdom, who were to devote themselves to hospital work and the instruction of poor girls, and the Company of Mary, composed of missionaries. He had long cherished these projects, but circumstances had hindered their execution, and, humanly speaking, the work appeared to have failed at his death, since these congregations numbered respectively only four sisters and two priests with a few brothers. But the blessed founder, who had on several occasions shown he had possessed the gift of prophecy, knew that the tree would grow. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Sisters of Wisdom numbered five thousand, and were spread throughout every country; they

possessed forty-four houses, and gave instruction to 60,000 children. After the death of its founder, the Company of Mary was governed for 39 years by Father Mulot. He had at first refused to join de Montfort in his missionary labours. "I cannot become a missionary," he said, "for I have been paralysed on one side for years; I have an affection of the lungs which scarcely allows me to breathe, and am indeed so ill that I have no rest day or night." But the holy man, impelled by a sudden inspiration, replied, "As soon as you begin to preach you will be completely cured." And the event justified the prediction. Saint Louis-Marie Grignon De Montfort was canonized by Pius XII in 1947.



SAINT LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT

PREFACE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It was in the year 1846 or 1847, at St. Wilfrid's, that I first studied the life and spirit of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort; and now, after more than fifteen years, it may be allowable to say, that those who take him for their master will hardly be able to name a saint or ascetical writer to whose grace and spirit their mind will be more subject than to his. We may not yet call him Saint; but the process of his beatification is so far and so favourably advanced, that we may not have long to wait before he will be raised upon the altars of the Church.

There are few men in the eighteenth century who have more strongly upon them the marks of the Man of Providence than this Elias-like Missionary of the Holy Ghost and of Mary. His entire life was such an exhibition of the holy folly of the Cross, that his biographers unite in always classing him with St. Simon Salo and St. Philip Neri. Clement XI. made him a missionary-apostolic in France, in order that he might spend his life in fighting against Jansenism, so far as it affected the salvation of souls. Since the apostolical epistles it would be hard to find words that burn so marvellously as the twelve pages of his prayer for the Missionaries of the Holy Ghost, to which I earnestly refer all those who find it hard to keep up, under their numberless trials, the first fires of the love of souls. He was at once persecuted and venerated every where. His amount of work, like that of St. Antony of Padua, is incredible and, indeed, inexplicable. He wrote some spiritual treatises, which have already had a remarkable influence on the Church during the few years they have been known, and bid fair to have a much wider influence in years to come. His preaching, his writing, and his conversation were all impregnated with prophecy, and with anticipations of the latter ages of the Church. He comes forward, like another St. Vincent Ferrer, as if on the days bordering on the Last Judgment, and proclaims that he brings an authentic message from God about the greater honour and

wider knowledge and more prominent love of His Blessed Mother, and her connexion with the second advent of her Son. He founded two religious congregations,—one of men, and one of women,—which have been quite extraordinarily successful; and yet he died at the age of forty-three, in 1716, after only sixteen years of priesthood.

It was on the 12th of May 1853, that the decree was pronounced at Rome, declaring his writings to be exempt from all error which could be a bar to his canonisation. In this very treatise on the veritable devotion to our Blessed Lady, he has recorded this prophecy. “I clearly foresee that raging brutes will come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little writing, and him whom the Holy Ghost has made use of to write it; or at least to envelop it in the silence of a coffer, in order that it may not appear.” Nevertheless, he prophesies both its appearance and its success. All this was fulfilled to the letter. The author died in 1716, and the treatise was found by accident by one of the priests of his congregation at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, in 1842. The existing superior was able to attest the handwriting as being that of the venerable founder; and the autograph was sent to Rome, to be examined in the process of canonisation.

All those who are likely to read this book love God, and lament that they do not love Him more; all desire something for His glory,—the spread of some good work, the success of some devotion, the coming of some good time. One man has been striving for years to overcome a particular fault, and has not succeeded. Another mourns, and almost wonders while he mourns, that so few of his relations and friends have been converted to the faith. One grieves that he has not devotion enough; another that he has a cross to carry, which is a peculiarly impossible cross to him; while a third has domestic troubles and family unhappinesses, which feel almost incompatible with his salvation; and for all these things prayer appears to bring so little remedy. But what is the remedy that is wanted? what is the remedy indicated by God Himself? If we may rely on the disclosures of the Saints, it is an immense increase of devotion to our Blessed Lady; but, remember, nothing short of an *immense* one. Here, in England, Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It is frightened out of its wits by the sneers of heresy. It is always invoking human respect and carnal

prudence, wishing to make Mary so little of a Mary that Protestants may feel at ease about her. Its ignorance of theology makes it unsubstantial and unworthy. It is not the prominent characteristic of our religion which it ought to be. It has no faith in itself. Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls, which might be saints, wither and dwindle; that the Sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelised. Jesus is obscured because Mary is kept in the background. Thousands of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the Saints, God is *pressing* for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to His Blessed Mother. I cannot think of a higher work or a broader vocation for any one than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Oh, if Mary were but known, there would be no coldness to Jesus then! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much more wonderful would be our faith, and how different would our Communion be! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much happier, how much holier, how much less worldly should we be, and how much more should we be living images of our sole Lord and Saviour, her dearest and most blessed Son!

I have translated the whole treatise myself, and have taken great pains with it, and have been scrupulously faithful. At the same time, I would venture to warn the reader that one perusal will be very far from making him master of it. If I may dare to say so, there is a growing feeling of something inspired and supernatural about it, as we go on studying it; and with that we cannot help experiencing, after repeated readings of it, that its novelty never seems to wear off, nor its fulness to be diminished, nor the fresh fragrance and sensible fire of its unction ever to abate. May the Holy Ghost, the Divine Zealot of Jesus and Mary, deign to give a new blessing to this work in England; and may He please to console us quickly with the canonisation of

this new apostle and fiery missionary of His most dear and most immaculate Spouse; and still more with the speedy coming of that great age of the Church, which is to be the Age of Mary!¹

F. W. Faber,
Priest of the Oratory.

Presentation of our Blessed Lady,
1862.

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION

“God wishes that His holy Mother should now be more known, more loved, more honoured, than ever she has been; and this will no doubt come to pass, if the predestinate will enter, by the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, into the interior and perfect practice which I will discover to them.” These words of the venerable servant of God, Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, cannot fail to interest our piety, and to inspire us with a lively desire of learning from him so excellent a practice of honouring the most holy Virgin.

He had been drawn from his earliest infancy, in quite a particular fashion, to the love of this Queen of Angels; and in a conversation which he had with his intimate friend Monsieur Blain, two years before his death, the pious missionary confessed to him that God had favoured him with an extraordinary grace, which was the continued presence of Jesus and Mary in the bottom of his soul. This word was a mystery to Monsieur Blain; but we shall see the explanation of it in this little treatise. We shall see revealed to us there the heart of him who knew no fairer name than the slave of Jesus in Mary. We do not, however, pretend to say that this explanation will be equally understood by all. We must remember here that word of the Eternal Wisdom, “Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to the little ones.” It has been said in the Life of the venerable servant of God, that his history will never be understood except by a Christian. It has this in common with the lives of a great number of the servants of God. We may say also that this little work will never be understood by a Christian who is too much a stranger to the maxims of humility and evangelical simplicity, and that the wise of this world will find themselves shocked at the lessons of true wisdom which they will read without penetrating their sense. *Animalis homo non percipit ea, quæ sunt Spiritus Dei. Stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere, quia*

spiritualiter examinatur. The man who guides himself only by natural light does not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. They seem to him follies, because they can only be judged by a supernatural light which he has not got. But let us hasten to add, that sincere and simple souls will relish the manna hidden in the pious and touching instructions of the virtuous priest who consumed his life in evangelising the poor. They will bless Divine Providence for the treasure. They will feel themselves penetrated with love for Jesus and Mary, in reading these burning pages, which the man of God wrote in the fervour of his prayer, without ever losing sight of the presence of our Divine Saviour and His holy Mother. . . . In conclusion, let us say a few words on the discovery of this treatise.

At the time of the French revolution in 1793, the manuscripts which the house of the Missionaries of St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre possessed were hidden in the neighbouring farms, where they remained buried in dust for many years. Later on, those which were found were put into the library of the missionaries. But this little treatise was not at that time recognised, as was the case with some others also composed by the venerable founder of the Company. It was not till 1842 that one of the priests of the house of St. Laurent found it by chance in the library, where it had been put without being recognised, after having been mixed up with a great number of imperfect books. “After I had read a few pages,” says the priest, “I took it, hoping to find it useful for making a sermon on our Lady. I read by chance the place where he speaks of his Company of Mary. I recognised the style and thoughts of our venerable founder, and his way of addressing his missionaries; and after that, I had no doubt the manuscript was his. I took it to our superior, who identified the handwriting.”²

INTRODUCTION

1. It is by the most holy Virgin Mary that Jesus has come into the world, and it is also by her that He has to reign in the world.
2. Mary has been singularly hidden during her life. It is on this account that the Holy Ghost and the Church call her *alma Mater*,—*Mother secret and hidden*. Her humility was so profound that she had no propensity on earth more powerful or more unintermitting than that of hiding herself, even from herself, as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God only.
3. He heard her prayers to Him, when she begged to be hidden, to be humbled, and to be treated as in all respects poor and of no account. He took pleasure in hiding her from all human creatures in her conception, in her birth, in her life, and in her resurrection and assumption. Her parents even did not know her, and the Angels often asked of each other: *Quæ est ista?* Who is that? Because the Most High either hid her from them, or if He revealed any thing of her to them, it was nothing compared to what He kept undisclosed.
4. God the Father consented that she should do no miracle, at least no public one, during her life, although He had given her the power. God the Son consented that she should hardly ever speak, though He had communicated His wisdom to her. God the Holy Ghost, though she was His faithful Spouse, consented that His Apostles and Evangelists should speak but very little of her, and no more than was necessary to make Jesus Christ known.
5. Mary is the excellent masterpiece of the Most High, of which He has reserved to Himself both the knowledge and the possession. Mary is the admirable Mother of the Son, who took pleasure in humbling and

concealing her during her life, in order to favour her humility, calling her by the name of *woman (mulier)*, as if she was a stranger, although in His heart He esteemed and loved her above all angels and all men. Mary is the sealed fountain and the faithful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, to whom He alone has entrance. Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity, where God dwells more magnificently and more divinely than in any other place in the universe, without excepting His dwelling between the Cherubim and Seraphim. Neither is it allowed to any creature, no matter how pure, to enter into that sanctuary without a great and special privilege.

6. I say with the Saints, The divine Mary is the terrestrial Paradise of the New Adam, where He is incarnate by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to work there incomprehensible marvels. She is the grand and divine World of God, where there are beauties and treasures unspeakable. She is the magnificence of the Most High, where He has hidden, as in her bosom, His only Son, and in Him all that is most excellent and most precious. Oh, what grand and hidden things that mighty God has wrought in this admirable creature! How has she herself been compelled to say it, in spite of her profound humility: *Fecit mihi magna, qui potens est!* “He that is mighty hath done great things to me!” The world knows them not, because it is at once incapable and unworthy of such knowledge.

7. The Saints have said admirable things of this Holy City of God; and, as they themselves avow, they have never been more eloquent and more content than when they have spoken of her. Yet, after all they have said, they cry out that the height of her merits, which she has raised up to the throne of the Divinity, cannot be fully seen; that the breadth of her charity, which is broader than the earth, is in truth immeasurable; that the grandeur of her power, which she exercises even over God Himself, incomprehensible; and finally, that the depth of her humility, and of all her virtues and graces, is an abyss which never can be sounded.

O height incomprehensible! O breadth unspeakable! O grandeur immeasurable! O abyss impenetrable!

8. Every day, from one end of the earth to the other, in the highest heights of the heavens and in the profoundest depths of the abysses, every thing preaches, every thing publishes, the admirable Mary! The nine choirs of Angels, men of all ages, sexes, conditions, and religions, good or bad, nay even the devils themselves, willingly or unwillingly, are compelled, by the force of truth, to call her Blessed.

St. Bonaventure tells us that all the Angels in heaven cry out incessantly to her, *Sancta, sancta, sancta Maria, Dei Genitrix et Virgo* “Holy, holy, holy Mary, Mother of God and Virgin” and that they offer to her millions and millions of times a day the Angelical Salutation, *Ave Maria*, “Hail Mary”; prostrating themselves before her, and begging of her, in her graciousness, to honour them with some of her commands.

St. Michael, as St. Augustine says, although the prince of all the heavenly court, is the most zealous in honouring her and causing her to be honoured, while he waits always in expectation that he may have the honour to go, at her bidding, to render service to some one of her servants.

9. The whole earth is full of her glory, especially among Christians, amongst whom she is taken as the protectress of many kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and cities. Numbers of cathedrals are consecrated to God under her name. There is not a church without an altar in her honour, not a country or a canton where there are not some miraculous images, where all sorts of evils are cured, and all sorts of good gifts obtained. Who can count the confraternities and congregations in her honour? How many religious orders have been founded in her name and under her protection! What numbers there are of Brothers and Sisters of all these confraternities, and of religious men and women of all these orders, who publish her praises and confess her mercies! There is not a little child, who, as it lisps the *Ave Maria*, does not praise her. There is scarcely a sinner who, even in his obduracy, has not some spark of confidence in her. Nay the very devils in hell respect her while they fear her.

10. After that we must surely say with the Saints, *De Maria nunquam satis*, “Of Mary there is never enough”; we have not yet praised, exalted,

honoured, loved, and served Mary as we ought to do. She has deserved still more praise, still more respect, still more love, and far more service.

11. After that we must say with the Holy Ghost, *Omnis gloria filiæ Regis ab intus*,—"All the glory of the King's daughter is within." It is as if all the outward glory, which heaven and earth rival each other in laying at her feet, is nothing in comparison with that which she receives within from the Creator, and which is not known by creatures, who in their littleness are unable to penetrate the secret of the secrets of the King.

12. After that we must cry out with the Apostle, *Nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit*,—"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart comprehended," the beauties, the grandeurs, the excellences, of Mary,—the miracle of the miracles of grace, of nature, and of glory.

If you wish to comprehend the Mother, says a Saint, comprehend the Son; for she is the worthy Mother of God. *Hic taceat omnis lingua*,—"Here let every tongue be mute."

13. It is with a particular joy that my heart has dictated what I have just written, in order to show that the divine Mary has been up to this time unknown, and that this is one of the reasons that Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be. If, then, as is certain, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to come into the world, it will be but a necessary consequence of the knowledge of the kingdom of the most holy Virgin Mary, who brought Him into the world the first time, and will make His second advent full of splendour.



TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

PART I

ON DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY IN GENERAL

I. EXCELLENCE AND NECESSITY OF DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY

14. I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being but a mere creature that has come from the hands of the Most High, is, in comparison with His Infinite Majesty, less than an atom; or rather she is nothing at all, because He only is “He who is,” and thus by consequence that grand Lord, always independent and sufficient to Himself, never had, and has not now, any absolute need of the Holy Virgin for the accomplishment of His will and for the manifestation of His glory. He has but to will, in order to do everything.

15. Nevertheless I say that, things being supposed as they are now, God having willed to commence and to complete His greatest works by the most holy Virgin, since He created her, we may well think He will not change His conduct in the eternal ages; for He is God, and He changes not either in His sentiments or in His conduct.

16. God the Father has not given His Only-begotten to the world except by Mary. Whatever sighs the patriarchs may have sent forth,—whatever prayers the prophets and the saints of the ancient law may have offered up to obtain that treasure for full four thousand years,—it was but Mary that merited it; it was but Mary who found grace before God by the force of her prayers and the eminence of her virtues. The world was unworthy, says St. Augustine, to receive the Son of God immediately from the Father’s hands. He has given Him to Mary in order that the world might receive Him through her. The Son of God has made Himself Man; but it was in Mary and by Mary. God the Holy Ghost has formed Jesus Christ in Mary; but it was only after having asked her consent by one of the first ministers of His court.

17. God the Father has communicated to Mary His fruitfulness, as far as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that He might give her the power to produce His Son, and all the members of His mystical Body.

18. God the Son has descended into her virginal womb, as the new Adam into the terrestrial paradise, to take His pleasure there, and to work in secret the marvels of His grace.

God made Man has found His liberty in seeing Himself imprisoned in her womb. He has made His Omnipotence shine forth in letting Himself be carried by that blessed Virgin. He has found His glory and His Father's in hiding His splendours from all creatures here below, and revealing them to Mary only. He has glorified His Independence and His Majesty, in depending on that sweet Virgin, in His Conception, in His Birth, in His Presentation in the Temple, in His Hidden Life of thirty years, and even in His Death, where she was to be present, in order that He might make with her but one same sacrifice, and be immolated to the Eternal Father by her consent; just as Isaac of old was offered by Abraham's consent to the Will of God. It is she who has suckled Him, nourished Him, supported Him, brought Him up, and then sacrificed Him for us.

O admirable and incomprehensible dependence of a God, which the Holy Ghost could not pass in silence in the Gospel, although He has hidden from us nearly all the admirable things which that Incarnate Wisdom did in His Hidden Life, as if He would enable us, by His revelation of that at least, to understand something of its price! Jesus Christ gave more glory to God the Father by submission to His Mother during those thirty years than He would have given Him in converting the whole world by the working of the most stupendous miracles. Oh, how highly we glorify God, when, to please Him, we submit ourselves to Mary, after the example of Jesus Christ, our Sole Exemplar!

19. If we examine narrowly the rest of our Blessed Lord's Life, we shall see that it was His Will to begin His miracles by Mary. He sanctified St. John in the womb of St. Elizabeth his mother; but it was by Mary's word. No sooner had she spoken than John was sanctified; and this was His first and

greatest miracle of grace. At the marriage at Cana He changed the water into wine; but it was at Mary's humble prayer; and this was His first miracle of nature. He has begun and continued His miracles by Mary, and He will continue them to the end of ages by Mary also.

20. God the Holy Ghost being barren in God—that is to say, not producing another Divine Person—is become fruitful by Mary, whom He has espoused. It is with her, in her, and of her, that He has produced His Masterpiece, which is a God made Man, and whom He goes on producing in the persons of His members daily to the end of the world. The predestinate are the members of that Adorable Head. This is the reason why He, the Holy Ghost, the more He finds Mary, His dear and indissoluble Spouse, in any soul, becomes the more active and mighty in producing Jesus Christ in that soul, and that soul in Jesus Christ.

21. It is not that we may say that our Blessed Lady gives the Holy Ghost His fruitfulness, as if He had it not Himself. For inasmuch as He is God, He has the same fruitfulness or capacity of producing as the Father and the Son, only that He does not bring it into action, as He does not produce another Divine Person. But what we want to say is, that the Holy Ghost chose to make use of our Blessed Lady, though He had no absolute need of her, to bring His fruitfulness into action, by producing in her and by her Jesus Christ in His members; a mystery of grace unknown to even the wisest and most spiritual among Christians.

22. The conduct which the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity have deigned to pursue in the Incarnation and first coming of Jesus Christ, They still pursue daily in an invisible manner throughout the whole Church, and They will still pursue it even to the consummation of ages in the last coming of Jesus Christ.

23. God the Father made an assemblage of all the waters, and He named it the sea (*mare*). He has made an assemblage of all His graces, and He has called it Mary (*Maria*). This great God has a most rich treasury in which He has laid up all that He has of beauty, of splendour, of rarity, and of preciousness, even to His own Son; and this immense treasury is none other

than Mary, whom the Saints have named the Treasure of the Lord, out of whose plenitude all men are made rich.

24. God the Son has communicated to His Mother all that He has acquired by His Life and by His Death, His infinite merits and His admirable virtues; and He has made her the treasuress of all that His Father has given Him for His inheritance. It is by her that He applies His merits to His members, and that He communicates His virtues, and distributes His graces. She is His mysterious canal; she is His aqueduct, through which He makes His mercies flow gently and abundantly.

25. To Mary, His faithful Spouse, God the Holy Ghost has communicated His unspeakable gifts; and He has chosen her to be the dispensatrix of all He possesses, in such sort that she distributes to whom she wills, as much as she wills, as she wills, and when she wills, all His gifts and graces. The Holy Ghost gives no heavenly gift to men which He does not pass through her virginal hands. Such has been the Will of God, who has willed that we should have every thing in Mary; so that she who impoverished, humbled, and hid herself even to the abyss of nothingness by her profound humility her whole life long, should now be enriched, and exalted by the Most High. Such are the sentiments of the Church and the Holy Fathers.

26. If I were speaking to the free-thinkers of these times, I would prove what I have said so simply, drawing it out more at length, and confirming it by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, quoting the original passages, and adducing various solid reasons, which may be seen at length in the book of Fr. Poiré (*La Triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*). But as I speak particularly to the poor and simple, who being of good-will, and having more faith than the common run of scholars, believe more simply and so more meritoriously, I content myself with putting out the truth quite simply, without stopping to quote the original passages, which they would not understand. Nevertheless, without making much research, I shall not fail from time to time to bring forward some of them. But let us now go on with our subject.

27. Inasmuch as grace perfects nature, and glory perfects grace, it is certain that our Lord is still, in heaven, as much the Son of Mary as He was on earth; and that, consequently, He has preserved the most perfect obedience and submission of all children towards the best of all mothers. But we must take great pains not to conceive of this dependence as any abasement or imperfection in Jesus Christ. For Mary is infinitely below her Son, who is God, and therefore she does not command Him, as a mother here below would command her child, who is below her. Mary, being altogether transformed into God by grace, and by the glory which transforms all the Saints into Him, asks nothing, wishes nothing, does nothing which is contrary to the Eternal and Immutable Will of God. When we read, then, in the writings of SS. Bernard, Bernardine, Bonaventure, and others, that in heaven and on earth every thing, even to God Himself, is subject to the Blessed Virgin, they mean to say that the authority which God has been well pleased to give her is so great, that it seems as if she has the same power as God, and that her prayers and petitions are so powerful with God, that they always pass for commandments with His Majesty, who never resists the prayer of His dear Mother, because she is always humble and conformed to His Will.

If Moses, by the force of his prayer, arrested the anger of God against the Israelites, in a manner so powerful that the Most High and infinitely merciful Lord, being unable to resist him, told him to let Him alone, that He might be angry with and punish that rebellious people, what must we not with much greater reason think of the prayer of the humble Mary, that worthy Mother of God, which is more powerful with His Majesty than the prayers and intercessions of all the Angels and Saints both in heaven and on earth?

28. Mary commands in the heavens the Angels and the Blessed. As a recompense for her profound humility, God has given her the power and permission to fill with Saints the empty thrones from which the apostate angels fell by pride. Such has been the will of the Most High, who exalts the humble, that heaven, earth, and hell bend with good will or bad will to the commandments of the humble Mary, whom He has made sovereign of heaven and earth, general of His armies, treasurer of His treasures,

dispenser of His graces, worker of His greatest marvels, restorer of the human race, mediatrix of men, the exterminator of the enemies of God, and the faithful companion of His grandeurs and His triumphs.

29. God the Father wishes to have children by Mary till the consummation of the world; and He has said to her these words, *In Jacob inhabita*, —“Dwell in Jacob,”—that is to say, Make your dwelling and residence in My predestinated children, figured by Jacob, and not in the reprobate children of the devil, figured by Esau.

30. Just as, in the natural and corporal generation of children, there is a father and a mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there is a Father, who is God, and a Mother, who is Mary. All the true children of God, the predestinate, have God for their Father, and Mary for their Mother. He who has not Mary for his Mother, has not God for his Father. This is the reason why the reprobate, such as heretics, schismatics, and others, who hate our Blessed Lady, or regard her with contempt and indifference, have not God for their Father, however much they boast of it, simply because they have not Mary for their Mother. For if they had her for their Mother, they would love and honour her as a true and good child naturally loves and honours the mother who has given him life.

The most infallible and indubitable sign by which we may distinguish a heretic, a man of bad doctrine, a reprobate, from one of the predestinate, is that the heretic and the reprobate have nothing but contempt and indifference for our Blessed Lady, endeavouring by their words and examples to diminish the worship and love of her openly or hiddenly, and sometimes under specious pretexts. Alas! God the Father has not told Mary to dwell in them, for they are Esaus.

31. God the Son wishes to form Himself, and, so to speak, to incarnate Himself, every day by His dear Mother in His members, and He has said to her, *In Israel hæreditare*, —“Take Israel for your inheritance.” It is as if He had said, God the Father has given Me for an inheritance all the nations of the earth, all the men good and bad, predestinate and reprobate. The one I will lead with a rod of gold, and the others with a rod of iron. Of one I will

be the Father and the Advocate, the Just Punisher of others, and the Judge of all. But as for you, My dear Mother,—you shall have for your heritage and possession only the predestinate, figured by Israel; and, as their good Mother, you shall bring them forth and maintain them; and, as their sovereign, you shall conduct them, govern and defend them.

32. “This man and that man is born in her,” says the Holy Ghost,—*Homo et homo natus est in ea* (Ps. 86:5). According to the explanation of some of the Fathers, the first man that is born in Mary is the Man-God, Jesus Christ; the second is a mere man, the child of God and Mary by adoption. If Jesus Christ the Head of men is born in her, the predestinate who are the members of that Head ought also to be born in her by a necessary consequence. One and the same mother does not bring forth into the world the head without the members, nor the members without the head; for this would be a monster of nature. So in like manner, in the order of grace, the Head and the members are born of one and the same Mother; and if a member of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ—that is to say, one of the predestinate—was born of any other mother than Mary, who has produced the Head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but simply a monster in the order of grace.

33. Besides this, Jesus being at present as much as ever the Fruit of Mary,—as heaven and earth repeat thousands and thousands of times a day, “and Blessed be the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus,”—it is certain that Jesus Christ is, for each man in particular who possesses Him, as truly the fruit of the work of Mary, as He is for the whole world in general; so that if any one of the faithful has Jesus Christ formed in his heart, he can say boldly, All thanks be to Mary! what I possess is her effect and her fruit, and without her I should never have had it. We can apply to her more truly than St. Paul applied to himself those words, *Quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis*,—“I am in labour again with all the children of God, until Jesus Christ my Son be formed in them in the fulness of His age.” St. Augustine, surpassing himself, and going beyond all I have yet said, affirms that all the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin; where they are guarded, nourished, brought up, and made to grow by that good

Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just. O mystery of grace, unknown to the reprobate, and but little known even to the predestinate!

34. God the Holy Ghost wishes to form Himself in her, and to form elect for Himself by her, and He has said to her, *In electis meis mitte radices*. Strike the roots, My Well-beloved and My Spouse, of all your virtues in My elect, in order that they may grow from virtue to virtue, and from grace to grace. I took so much complacency in you, when you lived on earth in the practice of the most sublime virtues, that I desire still to find you on earth, without your ceasing to be in heaven. For this end, reproduce yourself in My elect, that I may behold in them with complacency the roots of your invincible faith, of your profound humility, of your universal mortification, of your sublime prayer, of your ardent charity, of your firm hope, and all your virtues. You are always My Spouse, as faithful, as pure, and as fruitful as ever. Let your faith give Me My faithful, your purity My virgins, and your fertility My temples and My elect.

35. When Mary has struck her roots in a soul, she produces there marvels of grace, which she alone can produce, because she alone is the fruitful Virgin, who never has had, and never will have, her equal in purity and in fruitfulness.

Mary has produced, together with the Holy Ghost, the greatest thing which has been, or ever will be, which is a God-Man; and she will consequently produce the greatest things that there will be in the latter times.

The formation and education of the great Saints, who shall come at the end of the world, are reserved for her. For it is only that singular and miraculous Virgin who can produce, in union with the Holy Ghost, singular and extraordinary things.

36. When the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. He enters there in His fulness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which she makes room for her Spouse.

Nay, one of the great reasons why the Holy Ghost does not now do startling wonders in our souls is because He does not find there a sufficiently great union with His faithful and indissoluble Spouse. I say indissoluble Spouse, because since that Substantial Love of the Father and the Son has espoused Mary, in order to produce Jesus Christ, the Head of the elect, and Jesus Christ in the elect, He has never repudiated her, inasmuch as she has always been fruitful and faithful.

We may evidently conclude, then, from what I have said;

§ 1. That Mary has received from God a great domination over the souls of the elect; for she cannot make her residence in them, as God the Father ordered her to do, and form them in Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ in them, and strike the roots of her virtues in their hearts, and be the indissoluble companion of the Holy Ghost in all His works of grace,—she cannot, I say, do all these things unless she has a right and domination over their souls by a singular grace of the Most High, who, having given her power over His only and Natural Son, has given it also to her over His adopted children, not only as to their bodies, which would be but little matter, but also as to their souls.

38. Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace, as Jesus is the King of them by nature and by conquest. Now, as the kingdom of Jesus Christ consists principally in the heart and interior of a man,—according to that word, “The kingdom of God is within you,”—in like manner the kingdom of our Blessed Lady is principally in the interior of a man, that is to say, his soul; and it is principally in souls that she is more glorified with her Son than in all visible creatures, and that we can call her, as the Saints do, the Queen of hearts.

39. § 2. We must conclude that, the most holy Virgin being necessary to God by a necessity which we call hypothetical, in consequence of His Will, she is far more necessary to men, in order for them to arrive at their Last End. We must not confound devotions to our Blessed Lady with devotions to the other Saints, as if devotion to her was not far more necessary than devotion to them, or as if devotion to her were a matter of supererogation.

40. The learned and pious Suarez the Jesuit, the erudite and devout Justus Lipsius doctor of Louvain, and many others, have proved invincibly, in consequence of the sentiments of the Fathers (and, among others, of St. Augustine, St. Ephrem deacon of Edessa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. John Damascene, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Thomas, and St. Bonaventure), that devotion to our Blessed Lady is necessary to salvation, and that, even in the opinion of Ecolampadius and some other heretics, it is an infallible mark of reprobation to have no esteem and love for the holy Virgin; while on the other hand it is an infallible mark of predestination to be entirely and truly devoted to her.

41. The figures and words of the Old and New Testaments prove this. The sentiments and examples of the Saints confirm it. Reason and experience teach and demonstrate it. Even the devil and his crew, constrained by the force of truth, have often been obliged to avow it in their own despite.

Among all the passages of the holy Fathers and doctors, of which I have made an ample collection, in order to prove this truth, I shall, for brevity's sake, quote but one: *Tibi devotum esse, est arma quædam salutis quæ Deus his dat, quos vult salvos fieri*,—"To be devout to you, O holy Virgin," says St. John Damascene, "is an arm of salvation which God gives to those whom He wishes to save."

42. I could bring forward here many histories which prove the same thing, and, among others, one which is related in the chronicles of St. Dominic. There was an unhappy heretic near Carcassonne, where St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary, who was possessed by a legion of fifteen thousand devils. These evil spirits were compelled, to their confusion, by the commandment of our Blessed Lady, to avow many great and consoling truths, touching devotion to the holy Virgin; and they did this with so much force, and so much clearness, that it is not possible to read this authentic history, and the panegyric which the devil made, in spite of himself, of devotion to the most holy Mary, without shedding tears of joy, however lukewarm we may be in our devotion to her.

43. If devotion to the most holy Virgin Mary is necessary to all men, simply for working out their salvation, it is still more so for those who are called to any particular perfection; and I do not think any one can acquire an intimate union with our Lord, and a perfect fidelity to the Holy Ghost, without a very great union with the most holy Virgin, and a great dependence on her succour.

45. It is Mary alone who has found grace before God, without the aid of any other mere creature: it is only by her that all those who have found grace before God have found it at all; and it is only by her that all those who shall come afterwards shall find it. She was full of grace when she was saluted by the Archangel Gabriel, and she was superabundantly filled with grace by the Holy Ghost when He covered her with His unspeakable Shadow; and she has so augmented, from day to day and from moment to moment, this double plenitude, that she has reached a point of grace immense and inconceivable; in such sort that the Most High has made her the sole treasurer of His treasures, and the sole dispenser of His graces, to ennoble, to exalt, and to enrich whom she wishes; to give the entry to whom she wills into the narrow way of heaven; to pass whom she wills, and in spite of all obstacles, through the strait gate of life; and to give the throne, the sceptre, and the crown of the King to whom she wills. Jesus is every where and always the Fruit and the Son of Mary; and Mary is every where the veritable tree, who bears the Fruit of life, and the true Mother, who produces it.

45. It is Mary alone to whom God has given the keys of the cellars of divine love, and the power to enter into the most sublime and secret ways of perfection, and the power likewise to make others enter in there also. It is Mary alone who has given to the miserable children of Eve, the faithless, the entry into the terrestrial paradise, that they may walk there agreeably with God, hide themselves there securely against their enemies, and feed themselves there deliciously, without any more fear of death, on the fruit of the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, and drink in long draughts the heavenly waters of that fair fountain, which gushes forth there with abundance; or rather she is herself that terrestrial paradise, that virgin and blessed earth, from which Adam and Eve, the sinners, have been

driven, and she gives no entry there except to those whom it is her pleasure to make Saints.

46. All the rich among the people, to make use of an expression of the Holy Ghost, according to the explanation of St. Bernard,—all the rich among the people shall supplicate thy face from age to age, and particularly at the end of the world; that is to say, the greatest Saints, the souls richest in graces and virtues, shall be the most assiduous in praying to our Blessed Lady, and in having her always present as their perfect model to imitate, and their powerful aid to give them succour.

47. I have said that this would come to pass particularly at the end of the world, and indeed presently, because the Most High with His holy Mother has to form for Himself great Saints, who shall surpass most of the other Saints in sanctity, as much as the cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs, as has been revealed to a holy soul, whose life has been written by a great servant of God.

48. These great souls, full of grace and zeal, shall be chosen to match themselves against the enemies of God, who shall rage on all sides; and they shall be singularly devout to our Blessed Lady, illuminated by her light, nourished by her milk, led by her spirit, supported by her arm, and sheltered under her protection, so that they shall fight with one hand and build with the other. With one hand they shall fight, overthrow, and crush the heretics with their heresies, the schismatics with their schisms, the idolaters with their idolatries, and the sinners with their impieties. With the other hand they shall build the temple of the true Solomon, and the mystical city of God; that is to say, the most holy Virgin, called by the holy Fathers the temple of Solomon and the city of God. By their words and their examples they shall bend the whole world to true devotion to Mary. This shall bring upon them many enemies; but it shall also bring many victories and much glory for God alone. It is this which God revealed to St. Vincent Ferrer, the great apostle of his age, as he has sufficiently noted in one of his works.

It is this which the Holy Ghost seems to have prophesied in the fifty-eighth Psalm, of which these are the words: *Et scient quia Dominus dominabitur Jacob, et finium terræ; convertentur ad vesperam, et famem patientur ut canes, et circuibunt civitatem*,—"And they shall know that God will rule Jacob, and all the ends of the earth; they shall return at evening, and shall suffer hunger like dogs, and shall go round about the city."

This city which men shall find at the end of the world to convert themselves in, and to satisfy the hunger they have for justice, is the most holy Virgin, who is called by the Holy Ghost the City of God.

49. It is by Mary that the salvation of the world has begun, and it is by Mary that it must be consummated. Mary has hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him, in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her. This would have apparently taken place, if she had been known, because of the admirable charms which the Most High had bestowed even upon her exterior. This is so true that St. Denys the Areopagite has informed us in his writings that when he saw our Blessed Lady, he should have taken her for a Divinity, in consequence of her secret charms and incomparable beauty, had not the Faith in which he was well established taught him the contrary. But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost, in order that by her Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His Spouse during her life, and to reveal her but a very little since the preaching of the Gospel, subsist no longer.

50. God, then, wishes to reveal and discover Mary, the masterpiece of His hands, in these latter times:

§ 1. Because she hid herself in this world, and put herself lower than the dust by her profound humility, having obtained of God and of His Apostles and Evangelists that she should not be made manifest.

§ 2. Because, being the masterpiece of the hands of God, as well here below by grace as in heaven by glory, He wishes to be glorified and praised in her by those who are living upon the earth.

§ 3. As she is the aurora which precedes and discovers the Sun of Justice, who is Jesus Christ, she ought to be recognised and perceived, in order that Jesus Christ may be so.

§ 4. Being the way by which Jesus Christ came to us the first time, she will also be the way by which He will come the second time, though not in the same manner.

§ 5. Being the sure means and the straight and immaculate way to go to Jesus Christ, and to find Him perfectly, it is by her that the holy souls, who are to shine forth especially in sanctity, have to find our Lord. He who shall find Mary shall find life; that is, Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But no one can find Mary who does not seek her; and no one can seek her, who does not know her: for we cannot seek or desire an unknown object. It is necessary, then, for the greater knowledge and glory of the Most Holy Trinity, that Mary should be more known than ever.

§ 6. Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, in might, and in grace, in these latter times: in mercy, to bring back and lovingly receive the poor strayed sinners who shall be converted and shall return to the Catholic Church; in might, against the enemies of God, idolaters, schismatics, Mahometans, Jews, and souls hardened in impiety, who shall rise in terrible revolt against God to seduce all those who shall be contrary to them, and to make them fall by promises and threats; and, finally, she must shine forth in grace, in order to animate and sustain the valiant soldiers and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, who shall do battle for His interests.

§ 7. And, lastly, Mary must be terrible to the devil and his crew, as an army ranged in battle, principally in these latter times, because the devil, knowing that he has but little time, and now less than ever, to destroy souls, will every day redouble his efforts and his combats. He will presently raise up new persecutions, and will put terrible snares before the faithful servants

and true children of Mary, whom it gives him more trouble to surmount than it does to conquer others.

51. It is principally of these last and cruel persecutions of the devil, which shall go on increasing daily till the reign of Antichrist, that we ought to understand that first and celebrated prediction and curse of God, pronounced in the terrestrial Paradise against the serpent. It is to our purpose to explain this here, for the glory of the most holy Virgin, for the salvation of her children, and for the confusion of the devil.

Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo ejus (Gen. 3:15),—“I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”

52. God has never made or formed but one enmity; but it is an irreconcilable one, which shall endure and develop even to the end. It is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil,—between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and instruments of Lucifer. The most terrible of all the enemies which God has set up against the devil is His holy Mother, Mary. He has inspired her, even since the days of the earthly Paradise, though she existed then only in His idea, with so much hatred against that cursed enemy of God, with so much industry in unveiling the malice of that old serpent, with so much power to conquer, to overthrow, and to crush that proud impious rebel, that he fears her not only more than all Angels and men, but in some sense more than God Himself. It is not that the anger, the hatred, and the power of God are not infinitely greater than those of the Blessed Virgin, for the perfections of Mary are limited, but it is, first, because Satan, being proud, suffers infinitely more from being beaten and punished by a little and humble handmaid of God, and her humility humbles him more than the Divine power; and, secondly, because God has given Mary such a great power against the devils, that, as they have often been obliged to confess, in spite of themselves, by the mouths of the possessed, they fear one of her sighs for a soul more than the prayers of all the Saints, and one of her menaces against them more than all other torments.

53. What Lucifer has lost by pride, Mary has gained by humility. What Eve has damned and lost by disobedience, Mary has saved by obedience. Eve, in obeying the serpent, has destroyed all her children together with herself, and has delivered them to him; Mary, being perfectly faithful to God, has saved all her children and servants together with herself, and has consecrated them to His Majesty.

54. God has not only set an enmity but *enmities*, not simply between Mary and the devil, but between the race of the holy Virgin and the race of the devil; that is to say, God has set enmities, antipathies, and secret hatreds between the true children and the servants of Mary, and the children and servants of the devil. They do not love each other mutually. They have no inward correspondence with each other. The children of Belial, the slaves of Satan, the friends of the world (for it is the same thing), have always up to this time persecuted those who belong to our Blessed Lady, and will in future persecute them more than ever; just as of old Cain persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob, who are the figures of the reprobate and the predestinate. But the humble Mary will always have the victory over that proud spirit, and so great a victory that she will go the length of crushing his head, where his pride dwells. She will always discover the malice of the serpent. She will always counterwork his infernal mines and dissipate his diabolical counsels, and will guarantee even to the end of time her faithful servants from his cruel claw. But the power of Mary over all the devils will especially break out in the latter times, when Satan will lay his snares against her heel; that is to say, her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will raise up to make war against him. They shall be little and poor in the world's esteem, and abased before all, like the heel, trodden underfoot and persecuted as the heel is by the other members of the body. But in return for this, they shall be rich in the grace of God, which Mary shall distribute to them abundantly. They shall be great and exalted before God in sanctity, superior to all other creatures by their animated zeal, and leaning so strongly on the divine succour, that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they shall crush the head of the devil, and cause Jesus Christ to triumph.

55. In a word, God wishes that His holy Mother should be at present more known, more loved, more honoured, than she has ever been. This no doubt will take place, if the predestinate enter, with the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, into the interior and perfect practice which I will disclose to them shortly. Then they will see clearly, as far as faith allows, that beautiful Star of the Sea. They will arrive happily in harbour, following its guidance, in spite of the tempests and the pirates. They will know the grandeurs of that Queen, and will consecrate themselves entirely to her service, as subjects and slaves of love. They will experience her sweetnesses and her maternal goodnesses, and they will love her tenderly like well-beloved children. They will know the mercies of which she is full, and the need they have of her succour; and they will have recourse to her in all things, as to their dear advocate and mediatrix with Jesus Christ. They will know what is the most sure, the most easy, the most short, and the most perfect means by which to go to Jesus Christ; and they will deliver themselves to Mary, body and soul, without reserve, that they may thus be all for Jesus Christ.

56. But who shall be those servants, slaves, and children of Mary? They shall be a burning fire of the ministers of the Lord, who shall kindle the fire of divine love every where, and *sicut sagittæ in manu potentis*,—like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful Mary to pierce her enemies. They shall be the sons of Levi, well purified by the fire of great tribulation, and closely adhering to God; who shall carry the gold of love in their heart, the incense of prayer in their spirit, and the myrrh of mortification in their body; and they shall be every where the good odour of Jesus Christ to the poor and to the little, while they shall be an odour of death to the great, to the rich, and to the proud worldlings.

57. They shall be clouds thundering and flying through the air at the least breath of the Holy Ghost; who, without attaching themselves to any thing, without being astonished at any thing, without putting themselves in pain about any thing, shall shower forth the rain of the Word of God and of life eternal. They shall thunder against sin; they shall storm against the world; they shall strike the devil and his crew; and they shall strike further and further, for life or for death, with their two-edged sword of the Word of God, all those to whom they shall be sent on the part of the Most High.

58. They shall be the true apostles of the latter times, to whom the Lord of Hosts shall give the word and the might to work marvels, and to carry off the glory of the spoils of His enemies. They shall sleep without gold or silver, and, what is more, without care, in the middle of the other priests, ecclesiastics, and clerks, *inter medios cleros*; and yet they shall have the silvered wings of the dove, to go, with the pure intention of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wheresoever the Holy Ghost shall call them. Neither shall they leave behind them, in the places where they have preached, any thing but the gold of charity, which is the accomplishment of the whole law.

59. In a word, we know that they shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ, who, marching in the footsteps of His poverty, humility, contempt of the world, and charity, shall teach the strait way of God in the pure truth, according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world, without putting themselves in pain about things, or accepting persons, without sparing, fearing, or listening to any mortal, however influential he may be.

They shall have in their mouths the two-edged sword of the Word of God. They shall carry on their shoulders the bloody standard of the cross, the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left, the sacred names of Jesus and Mary on their hearts, and the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ in their own behaviour. These are the great men who shall come. But Mary shall be there by the order of the Most High, to extend His empire over that of the impious, the idolaters, and the Mahometans. But when and how shall this be? God alone knows. It is for us to hold our tongues, to pray, to sigh, and to wait,—*exspectans exspectavi*.



II. DISCERNMENT OF THE TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS PRESUPPOSED

60. Having said something so far of the necessity which we have of the devotion to the most holy Virgin, I must now show in what this devotion consists. This I will do, by God's help, after I shall have first presupposed some fundamental truths, which shall throw light on that grand and solid devotion which I desire to disclose.

FIRST TRUTH

61. Jesus Christ our Saviour, true God and true Man, ought to be the last end of all our other devotions, else they are false and delusive. Jesus Christ is the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end of all things. We labour not, as the Apostle says, except to render every man perfect in Jesus Christ; because it is in Him alone that the whole plenitude of the Divinity dwells, together with all the other plenitudes of graces, virtues, and perfections; because it is in Him alone that we have been blessed with all spiritual benediction; and because He is our only Master, who has to teach us; our only Lord, on whom we ought to depend; our only Head, to whom we must belong; our only Model, to whom we should conform ourselves; our only Physician, who can heal us; our only Shepherd, who can feed us; our only Way, who can lead us; our only Truth, who can make us grow; our only Life, who can animate us; and our only All in all things, who can suffice us. There has been no other name given under heaven, except the name of Jesus, by which we can be saved. God has laid no other foundation of our

salvation, of our perfection, and of our glory, except Jesus Christ. Every building which is not built upon that firm rock is founded upon the moving sand, and sooner or later will fall infallibly. Every one of the faithful who is not united to Him, as a branch to the stock of the vine, shall fall, shall wither, and shall be fit only to be cast into the fire. If we are in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in us, we have no condemnation to fear. Neither the Angels of heaven, nor the men of earth, nor the devils of hell, nor any other creatures, can injure us; because they cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. By Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, we can do all things; we can render all honour and glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost; we can become perfect ourselves, and be to our neighbour a good odour of eternal life.

62. If, then, we establish the solid devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only to establish more perfectly the devotion to Jesus Christ, and to put forward an easy and secure means for finding Jesus Christ. If devotion to our Lady removed us from Jesus Christ, we should have to reject it as an illusion of the devil; but on the contrary, so far from this being the case, there is nothing which makes devotion to our Lady more necessary for us, as I have already shown, and will show still further hereafter, than that it is the means of finding Jesus Christ perfectly, of loving Him tenderly, and of serving Him faithfully.

63. I here turn for one moment to Thee, O my sweet Jesus, to complain lovingly to Thy Divine Majesty that the greater part of Christians, even the most learned, do not know the necessary union which there is between Thee and Thy holy Mother. Thou, Lord, art always with Mary, and Mary is always with Thee, and she cannot be without Thee, else she would cease to be what she is. She is so transformed into Thee by grace that she lives no more, that she is as though she were not. It is Thou only, my Jesus, who livest and reignest in her more perfectly than in all the Angels and the Blessed. Ah! if we knew the glory and the love which Thou receivest in this admirable creature, we should have very different thoughts both of Thee and her from what we have now. She is so intimately united with Thee, that it were easier to separate the light from the sun, the heat from the fire. I say more: it were easier to separate from Thee all the Angels and the Saints

than the divine Mary, because she loves Thee more ardently, and glorifies Thee more perfectly, than all other creatures put together.

64. After that, my sweet Master, is it not an astonishingly pitiable thing to see the ignorance and the darkness of all men here below in regard to Thy holy Mother? I speak not so much of idolaters and pagans, who, knowing Thee not, care not to know Thee; I speak not even of heretics and schismatics, who care not to be devout to Thy holy Mother, being separated as they are from Thee and Thy holy Church: but I speak of Catholic Christians, and even of doctors amongst Catholics, who make profession of teaching truths to others, and yet know not Thee nor Thy holy Mother, except in a speculative, dry, barren, and indifferent manner. These doctors speak but rarely of thy holy Mother, and of the devotion which we ought to have to her, because they fear, so they say, lest we should abuse it, and should do some injury to Thee in too much honouring Thy holy Mother. If they see or hear any one devout to our Blessed Lady, speaking often of his devotion to that good Mother in a tender, strong, and persuasive way, as of a secure means without delusion, as of a short road without danger, as of an immaculate way without imperfection, and as of a wonderful secret for finding and loving Thee perfectly, they cry out against him, and give him a thousand false reasons by way of proving to him that he ought not to talk so much of our Blessed Lady, that there are great abuses in that devotion, and that we must direct our energies to destroy these abuses, and to speak of Thee, rather than to incline the people to devotion to our Blessed Lady, whom they already love sufficiently.

We hear them sometimes speak of devotion to Thy holy Mother, not for the purpose of establishing it and persuading men to it, but to destroy the abuses which are made of it, while all the time these teachers are without piety or tender devotion towards Thyself, simply because they have none for Mary. They regard the Rosary, the Scapular, and the Chaplet as devotions proper for weak and ignorant minds, and without which men can save themselves; and if there falls into their hands any poor client of our Lady, who says his Rosary, or has any other practice of devotion towards her, they soon change his spirit and his heart. Instead of the Rosary, they

counsel him the seven Penitential Psalms. Instead of devotion to the holy Virgin, they counsel him devotion to Jesus Christ.

O my sweet Jesus, have these people got Thy spirit? Do they please Thee in acting thus? Is it to please Thee, to spare one single effort to please Thy Mother for fear of thereby displeasing Thee? Does devotion to Thy holy Mother hinder devotion to Thyself? Is it that she attributes to herself the honour which we pay her? Is it that she makes a side for herself apart? Is it that she is an alien, who has no union with Thee? Does it displease Thee that we should try to please her? Is it to separate or to alienate ourselves from Thy love to give ourselves to her and to love her?

65. Yet, my sweet Master, the greater part of the learned could not shrink more from devotion to Thy holy Mother, and could not show more indifference to it, if all that I have just said were true! Keep me, Lord,—keep me from their sentiments and their practices, and give me some share in the sentiments of gratitude, esteem, respect, and love which Thou hadst in regard to Thy holy Mother, in order that I may love Thee and glorify Thee all the more by imitating and following Thee more closely.

66. So, as if up to this point I had still said nothing in honour of Thy holy Mother, give me now the grace to praise her worthily, *Fac me digne tuam Matrem collaudare*, in spite of all her enemies, who are Thine as well; and grant me to say loudly with the Saints, *Non præsumat aliquis Deum se habere propitium, qui benedictam Matrem offensam habuerit*,—"Let not that man presume to look for the mercy of God who offends His holy Mother."

67. To obtain of Thy mercy a true devotion to Thy holy Mother, and to inspire it to the whole earth, make me to love Thee ardently; and for that end receive the burning prayer which I make to Thee with St. Augustine and thy true friends:

"Tu es Christus, pater meus sanctus, Deus meus pius, rex meus magnus, pastor meus bonus, magister meus unus, adjutor meus optimus, dilectus meus pulcherrimus, panis meus vivus, sacerdos meus in æternum, dux meus ad patriam, lux mea vera, dulcedo mea sancta, via mea recta, sapientia mea præclara, simplicitas mea pura, concordia mea pacifica, custodia mea tota, portio mea bona, salus mea sempiterna.

“Christe Jesu, amabilis Domine, cur amavi, quare concupivi in omni vitâ meâ quidquam præter te Jesum Deum meum? Ubi eram quando tecum mente non eram? Jam ex hoc nunc, omnia desideria mea, incalescite et effluite in Dominum Jesum; currite, satis hactenus tardâstis; properate, quò pergitis; quærite quam quæritis. Jesu, qui non amat te, anathema sit; qui te non amat, amaritudinibus repleatur.

“O dulcis Jesu, te amet, in te delectetur, te admiretur omnis sensus bonus tuæ conveniens laudi; Deus cordis mei et pars mea, Christe Jesu, deficiat cor meum spiritu suo, et vivas tu in me, et concalescat spiritu meo vivus carbo amoris tui, et excrescat in ignem perfectum, ardeat jugiter in arâ cordis mei, ferveat in medullis meis, flagret in absconditis animæ meæ; in die consummationis meæ consummatus inveniar apud te. Amen.”

I have desired to put in Latin this admirable prayer of St. Augustine, in order that those who understand Latin may say it every day, to ask for the love of Jesus, which we seek by the divine Mary.

[The translator thinks it well to give the prayer in English, and without throwing it into the small print of a note:]

Thou art Christ, my holy Father, my tender God, my great King, my good Shepherd, my one Master, my best Helper, my most Beautiful and my Beloved, my living Bread, my Priest for ever, my Leader to my country, my true Light, my holy Sweetness, my straight Way, my excellent Wisdom, my pure Simplicity, my pacific Harmony, my whole Guard, my good Portion, my everlasting Salvation.

Christ Jesus, sweet Lord, why have I ever loved, why in my whole life have I ever desired, any thing except Thee, Jesus my God? Where was I, when I was not in Thy mind with Thee? Now, from this time forth, do ye, all my desires, grow hot, and flow out upon the Lord Jesus; run,—ye have been tardy so far; hasten whither ye are going; seek whom ye are seeking. O Jesus, may he who loves Thee not be anathema; may he who loves Thee not be filled with bitterness!

O sweet Jesus, may every good feeling that is fitted for Thy praise love Thee, delight in Thee, admire Thee, God of my heart, and my Portion! Christ Jesus, may my heart faint away in spirit, and mayest Thou be my life within me! May the live coal of Thy love grow hot within my spirit, and break forth into a perfect fire; may it burn incessantly on the altar of my heart; may it glow in my innermost being; may it blaze in hidden recesses of my soul; and in the day of my consummation may I be found consummated with Thee! Amen.

SECOND TRUTH

68. We must conclude, from what Jesus Christ is with regard to us, that we do not belong to ourselves, but, as the Apostle says, are entirely His, as His members and His slaves, whom He has bought at an infinitely dear price,—the price of all His Blood. Before Baptism we belonged to the devil, as his

slaves; but Baptism has made us true slaves of Jesus Christ, who have no right to live, to work, or to die, except to bring forth fruit for that God-Man, to glorify Him in our bodies, and to let Him reign in our souls, because we are His conquest, His acquired people, and His inheritance. It is for the same reason that the Holy Ghost compares us, (1) to trees planted along the waters of grace in the field of the Church, who ought to bring forth their fruit in their seasons; (2) to the branches of a vine, of which Jesus Christ is the stock, and which must yield good grapes; (3) to a flock of which Jesus Christ is the shepherd, and which is to multiply and give milk; (4) to a good land, of which God is the labourer, in which the seed multiplies itself, and brings forth thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and a hundred-fold. Jesus Christ cursed the unfruitful fig-tree, and gave sentence against the useless servant, who had not made any profit on his talent. All this proves to us that Jesus Christ wishes to receive some fruits from our wretched selves, namely, our good works, because those good works belong to Him alone: *Creati in operibus bonis in Christo Jesu*,—"Created in good works in Christ Jesus,"—which words show both that Jesus Christ is the sole principle, and ought to be the sole end of all our good works, and also that we ought to serve Him, not as servants on wages, but as slaves of love. I will explain myself:

69. Here on earth there are two ways of belonging to another, and of depending on his authority, namely, simple service and slavery,—what we mean by a servant, and what we mean by a slave.

By common service amongst Christians a man engages himself to serve another, during a certain time, at a certain rate of wages or of recompense.

By slavery a man is entirely dependent on another for his whole life, and must serve his master without pretending to any wages or reward, just as one of his beasts, over which he has the right of life and death.

70. There are three sorts of slavery: a slavery of nature, a slavery of constraint, and a slavery of the will. All creatures are slaves of God in the first sense: *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus*,—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness of it." The demons and the damned are slaves in the second sense; the just and the Saints in the third. The slavery of the will is the most

glorious to God, who looks at the heart, claims the heart, and calls Himself the God of the heart; that is, of the loving will, because by that slavery we make choice of God and His service above all things, even when nature does not oblige us to it.

71. There is an entire difference between a servant and a slave: (1) A servant does not give all he is, all he has, and all he can acquire by himself or by another, to his master; but the slave gives himself whole and entire to his master, all he has and all he can gain, without any exception. (2) The servant exacts wages for the services which he performs for his master; but the slave can exact nothing, whatever assiduity, whatever industry, whatever energy, he may have at his work. (3) The servant can leave his master when he pleases, or at least when the time of his service shall be expired; but the slave has no right to quit his master at his will. (4) The master of the servant has no right of life and death over him, so that if he kill him like one of his beasts of burden, he would commit an unjust homicide; but the master of the slave has by the law a right of life and death over him, so that he may sell him to any body he likes, or kill him, as if he stood on the same level as one of his horses. (5) Lastly, the servant is only for a time in his master's service; the slave is for always.

72. There is nothing among men which makes us belong to another more than slavery. There is nothing among Christians which makes us more absolutely belong to Jesus Christ and His holy Mother than the slavery of the will, according to the example of Jesus Christ Himself, who took on Him the form of a slave for love of us,—*Formam servi accipiens*,—and also accord-to the example of the holy Virgin, who is called the servant and the slave of the Lord. The Apostle calls himself, as by a title of honour, *Servus Christi*,—"The slave of Christ." Christians are often called in the Holy Scriptures *Servi Christi*, "Slaves of Christ,"—which word *servus*, as a great man has truly remarked, signified in old times nothing but a slave, because there were no servants then like those of the present day. Masters were served only either by slaves or by freedmen. It is this which the catechism of the Holy Council of Trent, in order to leave no doubt about our being slaves of Jesus Christ, expresses by an unequivocal term, in calling us *Mancipia Christi*,—"Slaves of Jesus Christ."

73. Having premised this, I say that we ought to be to Jesus Christ and to serve Him not only as mercenary servants, but as loving slaves, who, by an effect of great love, give themselves up to serve Him in the quality of slaves, for the simple honour of belonging to Him. Before Baptism we were the slaves of the devil; Baptism has made us the slaves of Jesus Christ: Christians must needs be either the slaves of the devil or the slaves of Jesus Christ.

74. What I say absolutely of Jesus Christ, I say relatively of our Blessed Lady. Jesus Christ, having chosen her for the inseparable companion of His life, of His death, of His glory, and of His power in heaven and upon earth, has given her by grace, relatively to His Majesty, all the same rights and privileges which He possesses by nature. *Quidquid Deo convenit per naturam, Mariæ convenit per gratiam*,—"All that is fitting to God by nature is fitting to Mary by grace,"—say the Saints; so that, according to them, Mary and Jesus having but the same will and the same power, the two have the same subjects, servants, and slaves.

75. We may, therefore, following the sentiments of the Saints and of many great men, call ourselves, and make ourselves, the loving slaves of the most holy Virgin, in order to be by that very means the more perfectly the slaves of Jesus Christ. Our Blessed Lady is the means our Lord made use of to come to us. She is also the means which we must make use of to go to Him. For she is not like all the rest of creatures, who, if we should attach ourselves to them, might rather draw us away from God than draw us near Him. The strongest inclination of Mary is to unite us to Jesus Christ her Son; and the strongest inclination of the Son is, that we should come to Him by His holy Mother. It is to honour and please Him, just as it would be to do honour and pleasure to a king, to become more perfectly his subject and his slave, by making ourselves the slaves of the queen. It is on this account that the holy Fathers, and St. Bonaventure after them, said that our Lady was the way to go to our Lord: *Via veniendi ad Christum est appropinquare ad illam*.

76. Moreover, if, as I have said, the holy Virgin is the Queen and Sovereign of heaven and of earth, then is it not true what has been said by St. Anselm,

St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, and St. Bonaventure,—has she not as many subjects and slaves as there are creatures? *Imperio Dei omnia subjiciuntur, et Virgo; ecce imperio Virginis omnia subjiciuntur, et Deus.* Is it not reasonable that amongst so many slaves of constraint, there should be some of love, who of their own good will, in the quality of slaves, should choose Mary for their mistress? What! are men and devils to have their voluntary slaves, and Mary to have none? What! shall a king hold it to be for his honour that the queen, his companion, should have slaves over whom she has the right of life and death, because the honour and power of the one is the honour and power of the other, and yet are we to think that our Lord, who, as the best of all Sons, has divided His entire power with His holy Mother, shall take it ill that she too has her slaves? Has He less respect and love for His Mother than Ahasuerus had for Esther, or than Solomon for Bathsebee? Who shall dare to say so, or even to think it?

77. But whither is my pen hurrying me? Why am I stopping here to prove a thing so plain? If we do not wish to call ourselves slaves of the Blessed Virgin, what matter? Let us make ourselves and call ourselves slaves of Jesus Christ; for that is to be the slave of the holy Virgin, inasmuch as Jesus is the fruit and the glory of Mary; and it is this very thing which we do, by the devotion of which we are hereafter to speak.

THIRD TRUTH

78. Our best actions are ordinarily stained and corrupted by the ground of evil which is so deeply laid up in us. When we put clean and clear water into a vessel which has a foul and evil smell, or wine into a cask the inside of which has been spoilt by another wine which has been in it, the clear water and the good wine are spoilt, and readily take the bad odour. In like manner, when God puts into the vessel of our soul, spoilt by original and actual sin, His graces and heavenly dews, or the delicious wine of His love, His gifts are ordinarily spoilt and corrupted by the bad leaven and the evil which sin has left within us. Our actions, even the most sublime and virtuous, feel the effects of it. It is therefore of great importance in the acquiring of perfection, which it must be remembered is only acquired by union with Jesus Christ, to empty ourselves of every thing which is bad

within us; otherwise our Lord, who is infinitely pure and hates infinitely the least stain upon our souls, will cast us out from His presence, and will not unite Himself to us.

79. § 1. To empty ourselves of ourselves, we must, first, thoroughly recognise, by the light of the Holy Ghost, our inward corruption, our incapacity for every good thing useful for salvation, our weakness in all things, our inconstancy at all times, our indignity of every grace, and our iniquity in every position. The sin of our first father has spoilt us all, soured us, puffed us up and corrupted us, as the leaven sours, puffs, and corrupts the paste into which it is put. The actual sins which we have committed, whether mortal or venial, pardoned though they may be, have nevertheless increased our concupiscence, our weakness, our inconstancy, and our corruption, and have left evil consequences in our souls. Our bodies are so corrupted that they are called by the Holy Ghost bodies of sin, conceived in sin, nourished in sin, and capable of all sin,—bodies subject to thousands of maladies, which go on corrupting from day to day, and which engender nothing but disease, vermin, and corruption.

Our soul, united to our body, has become so carnal, that it is called flesh. “All flesh having corrupted its way,” we have nothing for our portion but pride and blindness in the spirit, hardness in the heart, weakness and inconstancy in the soul, concupiscence, revolted passions, and sicknesses in the body. We are naturally prouder than peacocks, more grovelling on the earth than toads, more vile than unclean animals, more envious than serpents, more gluttonous than hogs, more furious than tigers, lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more capricious than weathercocks. We have down in our own selves nothing but nothingness and sin, and we deserve nothing but the anger of God, and the everlasting hell.

80. After this, ought we to be astonished if our Lord has said, that whosoever wishes to follow Him must renounce himself and hate his own soul, and that whosoever shall love his own soul shall lose it, and whosoever shall hate it shall save it? He who is infinite Wisdom does not give commandments without reason, and He has only commanded us to

hate ourselves, because we so richly deserve to be hated. Nothing is worthier of love than God, and nothing is worthier of hatred than ourselves.

81. § 2. Secondly, in order to empty ourselves of ourselves, we must die to ourselves daily. That is to say, we must renounce the operations of the powers of our soul, and of the senses of our body. We must see as if we saw not, understand as if we understood not, and make use of the things of this world as if we made no use of them at all. This is what St. Paul calls dying daily,—*Quotidie morior*. If the grain of corn falling on the earth does not die, it remains earth, and brings forth no good fruit. *Nisi granum frumenti, cadens in terram, mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet*. If we die not to ourselves, and if our holiest devotions do not incline us to this necessary and useful death, we shall bring forth no fruit worth any thing, and our devotions will become useless. All our justices will be stained by self-love and our own will; and this will cause God to hold in abomination the greatest sacrifices we can make, and the best actions we can do; so that at our death we shall find our hands empty of virtues and of merits, and we shall not have one spark of pure love, which is only communicated to souls dead to themselves, souls whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God.

82. § 3. We must choose, therefore, among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin, the one which draws us most towards this death to ourselves, inasmuch as it will be the best and the most sanctifying. For we must not think that all that shines is gold, that all that tastes sweet is honey, or all that is easy to do and is done by the greatest number is sanctifying. As there are secrets of nature to do in a short time, at little cost and with facility, natural operations, so also in like manner there are secrets in the order of grace to do in a short time, with sweetness and facility, supernatural operations, such as emptying ourselves of self, filling ourselves with God, and becoming perfect.

The practice which I am about to disclose is one of these secrets of grace, unknown by the greater number of Christians, known even to few of the devout, and practised and relished by a far less number still. But in order to begin to disclose this practice, let us consider a fourth truth, which is a consequence of the third.

FOURTH TRUTH

83. It is more perfect, because it is more humble, not to approach God of ourselves, without taking a mediator. The very foundation of our nature, as I have just shown, is so corrupted, that if we lean on our own works, industries, and preparations, in order to reach God and to please Him, it is certain that our justices will be defiled, or be of little weight before God, to engage Him to unite Himself to us, and to hear us. It is not without reason that God has given us mediators with His Majesty. He has seen our unworthiness and incapacity. He has had pity upon us; and, in order to give us access to His mercies, He has provided us with powerful intercessors with His grandeur, insomuch that to neglect these mediators, and to draw near to His holiness directly, and without any recommendation, is to fail in humility. It is to fail in respect towards God, so high and so holy. It is to make less account of that King of kings than we should make of a king or prince of earth, whom we should not willingly approach without some friend to speak for us.

84. Our Lord is our Advocate and Mediator of redemption with God the Father. It is by Him that we ought to pray, in union with the whole Church triumphant and militant. It is by Him that we have access to the Majesty of the Father, before whom we ought never to appear except leaning on the merits, and indeed clothed with the merits, of His Son; just as the young Jacob came before his father Isaac in the skins of the kids to receive his benediction.

85. But have we not need of a mediator with the Mediator Himself? Is our purity great enough to unite us directly to Him, and by ourselves? Is He not God, in all things equal to His Father, and by consequence the Holy of Holies, as worthy of respect as His Father? If, by His infinite charity, He has made Himself our bail and our Mediator with God His Father, in order to appease Him and to pay Him what we owed Him, are we on that account to have less respect and less fear for His Majesty and His Sanctity?

Let us say boldly with St. Bernard, that we have need of a mediator with the Mediator Himself, and that it is the divine Mary who is the most capable of

filling that charitable office. It is by her that Jesus Christ came, and it is by her that we must go to Him. If we fear to go directly to Jesus Christ our God, whether because of His infinite greatness, or because of our vileness, or because of our sins, let us boldly implore the aid and intercession of Mary our Mother. She is good, she is tender, she has nothing in her austere or repulsive, nothing too sublime and too brilliant. In seeing her, we see our pure nature. She is not the sun, who, by the vivacity of his rays, blinds us because of our weakness; but she is fair and gentle as the moon, which receives the light of the sun, and tempers it to render it more suitable to our capacity. She is so charitable that she repels none of those who ask her intercession, no matter how great sinners they have been; for, as the Saints say, never has it been heard since the world was the world, that any one has confidently and perseveringly had recourse to our Blessed Lady, and yet has been repelled.

She is so powerful that never have any of her petitions been refused. She has but to show herself before her Son to pray to Him, and straightway He grants her desires, straightway He receives her prayers. He is always lovingly vanquished by the breasts, the yearnings, and the prayers of His dearest Mother.

86. All this is drawn from St. Bernard and from St. Bonaventure, so that, according to them, we have three steps to mount to go to God: the first, which is the nearest to us, and the most suited to our capacity, is Mary; the second is Jesus Christ; and the third is God the Father. To go to Jesus, we must go to Mary; she is our mediatrix of intercession. To go to God the Father, we must go to Jesus; for He is our Mediator of redemption. Now it is by the devotion which I am about to bring forward, that this order is guarded perfectly.

FIFTH TRUTH

87. It is very difficult, considering our weakness and frailty, to preserve in ourselves the graces and treasures which we have received from God:—

§ 1. Because we have this treasure, which is worth more than heaven and earth put together, in frail vessels,—*Habemus thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus*,—in a corruptible body, and in a weak and inconstant soul, which a mere nothing disturbs and dejects.

88. § 2. Because the devils, who are skilful thieves, wish to surprise us unawares, and to strip us. They watch day and night for the favourable moment. For that end they go round about us incessantly to devour us, and to snatch from us in one moment, by a sin, all that we have gained of graces and of merits for many years. Their malice, their experience, their stratagems, and their number, ought to make us fear immensely this misfortune, especially when we see how many persons, fuller of grace than we are, richer in virtues, better founded in experience, and far higher exalted in sanctity, have been surprised, robbed, and unhappily pillaged. Ah! how many of the cedars of Lebanon, how many of the stars of the firmament, have we not seen to fall miserably, and in the twinkling of an eye to lose all their height and all their brightness! Whence comes that sad and curious change? It has not been for want of grace, which is wanting to no man; but it has been want of humility. They thought themselves stronger and more sufficient than they were. They thought themselves capable of guarding their own treasures. They trusted in themselves, leaned upon themselves. They thought their house secure enough, and their coffers strong enough, to keep the precious treasure of their grace. It is because of that scarcely sensible leaning upon themselves, while all the while it seemed to them that they were leaning only on the grace of God, that the most just Lord has permitted them to be robbed by leaving them to themselves. Alas! if they had but known the admirable devotion which I will unfold presently, they would have confided their treasure to a Virgin, powerful and faithful, who would have kept it for them as if it had been her own possession; nay, who would have even taken it as an obligation of justice on herself to preserve it for them.

89. § 3. It is difficult to persevere in justice because of the strange corruption of the world. The world is now so corrupt, that it seems to be inevitable that religious hearts should be soiled, if not by its mud, at least by its dust. So that it has become a kind of miracle for any one to remain firm

in the midst of this impetuous torrent without being drawn in by it, in the midst of that stormy sea without being drowned in it or stripped by the pirates and the corsairs, in the midst of that pestilent air without being infected by it. It is the Virgin, alone faithful, in whom the serpent has never had part, who works this miracle for those who serve her in that sweet way which I have shortly to unfold.

90. Having assumed these Five Truths, we must now take more pains than ever to make a good choice of the true devotion to our Blessed Lady. There are at this time, more than ever, false devotions to our Blessed Lady, which it is easy to mistake for true ones. The devil, like a false coiner and a subtle and experienced sharper, has already deceived and destroyed so many souls by a false devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that he makes a daily use of his diabolical experience to plunge many others by this same way into everlasting perdition; amusing them, lulling them to sleep in sin, under the pretext of some prayers badly said, or of some outward practices which he inspires. As a false coiner does not ordinarily counterfeit any thing but gold and silver, or very rarely the other metals, because they are not worth the trouble, so the evil spirit does not for the most part counterfeit the other devotions, but only those to Jesus and Mary, the devotion to Holy Communion, and to our Blessed Lady, because they are, among other devotions, what gold and silver are amongst metals.

91. It is, then, very important first of all to know (1) false devotions to our Blessed Lady in order to avoid them; and (2) the true devotion in order to embrace it. In conclusion, among so many practices of true devotion to our Blessed Lady, I will explain more in detail, in the second part of this treatise, which is the most perfect one, the one most agreeable to our Lady, the most glorious to God, and the most sanctifying to ourselves, in order that we may attach ourselves to it.



1. ON FALSE DEVOTIONS TO OUR LADY

92. I find seven kinds of false devotees and false devotions to our Lady, namely, (1) the critical devotees; (2) the scrupulous devotees; (3) the external devotees; (4) the presumptuous devotees; (5) the inconstant devotees; (6) the hypocritical devotees; and (7) the interested devotees.

93. The *critical* devotees are, for the most part, proud scholars, rash and self-sufficient spirits, who have at bottom some devotion to the holy Virgin, but who criticise nearly all the practices of devotion to her, which the simple people pay simply and holily to their good Mother, because these practices do not fall in with their own humour and fancy. They call in doubt all the miracles and histories recorded by authors worthy of our faith, or drawn from the chronicles of religious orders; narratives which testify to us the mercies and the power of the most holy Virgin. They cannot see without uneasiness simple and humble people on their knees before an altar or an image of our Lady, sometimes in the corner of a street, in order to pray to God there; and they even accuse them of idolatry, as if they adored the wood or the stone. They say that, for their part, they are not fond of these external devotions, and that their minds are not so weak as to give faith to such a number of tales and little histories as are in circulation about our Lady. Or, at other times, they reply that the narrators have spoken as professional orators, with exaggeration; or they put a bad interpretation upon their words. These kind of false devotees and of proud and worldly people are greatly to be feared. They do an infinite wrong to the devotion to our Lady; and they are but too successful in alienating people from it, under the pretext of destroying its abuses.

94. The *scrupulous* devotees are those who fear to dishonour the Son by honouring the Mother, to abase the one in elevating the other. They cannot bear that we should attribute to our Lady the most just praises which the

holy Fathers have given her. It is all they can do to endure that there should be more people before the altar of the Blessed Virgin than before the Blessed Sacrament, as if the one was contrary to the other, as if those who prayed to our Blessed Lady did not pray to Jesus Christ by her. They are unwilling that we should speak so often of our Lady, and address ourselves so frequently to her. These are the favourite sentences constantly in their mouths: “To what end are so many chaplets, so many confraternities, and so many external devotions to the Blessed Virgin? There is much of ignorance in all this. It makes a mummerly of our religion. Speak to us of those who are devout to Jesus Christ” (yet they often name Him without uncovering: I say this by way of parenthesis). “We must have recourse to Jesus Christ; He is our only Mediator. We must preach Jesus Christ; this is the solid devotion.” What they say is true in a certain sense, but it is very dangerous, when, by the application they make of it, they hinder devotion to our Blessed Lady, and it is, under the pretext of a greater good, a subtle snare of the evil one. For never do we honour Jesus Christ more than when we are most honouring His Blessed Mother. Indeed we only honour Mary that we may the more perfectly honour Jesus, inasmuch as we only go to her as to the way in which we are to find the end we are seeking, which is Jesus.

95. The Church, with the Holy Ghost, blesses our Lady first, and our Lord second,—*Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus*. It is not that Mary is more than Jesus, or even equal to Him. That would be an intolerable heresy; but it is that, in order to bless Jesus more perfectly, we must begin by blessing Mary. Let us, then, say with all the true clients of our Lady against these false scrupulous devotees, O Mary, thou art blessed amongst all women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

96. *External* devotees are persons who make all devotion to our Blessed Lady consist in outward practices. They have no taste except for the exterior of this devotion, because they have no interior spirit of their own. They will say quantities of Rosaries with the greatest precipitation; they will hear many Masses distractedly; they will go without devotion to processions; they will enrol themselves in all sorts of confraternities, without amending their lives, without doing any violence to their passions, or without imitating the virtues of that most holy Virgin. They have no love

but for the sensible part of devotion, without having any relish for its solidity. If they have not sensible sweetness in their practices, they think they are doing nothing; they get all out of joint, throw every thing up, or do every thing at random. The world is full of these exterior devotees; and there are no people who are more critical of men of prayer, of those who foster an interior spirit as the essential thing, while they do not lightly account of that outward modesty which always accompanies true devotion.

97. *Presumptuous* devotees are sinners abandoned to their passions, or lovers of the world, who, under the fair name of Christians and clients of our Blessed Lady, conceal pride, avarice, impurity, drunkenness, anger, swearing, detraction, injustice, or some other sin. They sleep in peace in the midst of their bad habits, without doing any violence to themselves to correct their faults, under the pretext that they are devout to the Blessed Virgin. They promise themselves that God will pardon them; that they will not be allowed to die without confession; and that they will not be lost eternally, because they say the Rosary, because they fast on Saturdays, because they belong to the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, or wear the scapular, or are enrolled in other congregations, or wear the little habit or little chain of our Lady.³ They will not believe us when we tell them that their devotion is only an illusion of the devil, and a pernicious presumption likely to destroy their souls. They say that God is good and merciful; that He has not made us to condemn us everlastingly; that no man is without sin; that they shall not die without confession; that one good Peccavi at the hour of death is enough; that they are devout to our Lady; that they wear the scapular; and that they say daily, without reproach or vanity, seven Paters and Aves in her honour; and that they sometimes say the Rosary and the Office of our Lady, besides fasting, and other things. To give authority to all this, and to blind themselves still further, they quote certain stories, which they have heard or read,—it does not matter to them whether they be true or false,—relating how people have died in mortal sin without confession; and then, because in their lifetime they sometimes said some prayers, or went through some practices of devotion to our Lady, how they have been raised to life again, in order to go to confession, or their soul been miraculously retained in their bodies till confession; or how they have obtained from God

at the moment of death contrition and pardon of their sins, and so have been saved; and that they themselves expect similar favours.

98. Nothing in Christianity is more detestable than this diabolical presumption. For how can we say truly that we love and honour our Blessed Lady, when by our sins we are pitilessly piercing, wounding, crucifying, and outraging Jesus Christ her Son? If Mary laid down a law to herself, to save by her mercy this sort of people, she would be authorising crime, and assisting to crucify and outrage her Son. Who would dare to think such a thought as that?

99. I say, that thus to abuse devotion to our Lady, which, after devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, is the holiest and solidest of all devotions, is to be guilty of a horrible sacrilege, which, after the sacrilege of an unworthy Communion, is the greatest and the least pardonable of all sacrileges.

I confess that, in order to be truly devout to our Blessed Lady, it is not absolutely necessary to be so holy as to avoid every sin, though this were to be wished; but so much at least is necessary, and I beg you to lay it well to heart:—

(1) To have a sincere resolution to avoid, at least, all mortal sin, which outrages the Mother as well as the Son. (2) I would add also to do violence to ourselves to avoid sin, to enrol ourselves in confraternities, to say the Rosary or other prayers, to fast on Saturdays, and the like.

100. These are wonderfully useful to the conversion of a sinner, however hardened; and if my reader is such a one, even if he has his foot in the abyss, I would counsel these things to him. Nevertheless it must be on the condition that he will only practise these good works with the intention of obtaining from God, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the grace of contrition and the pardon of his sins, to conquer his evil habits, and not to remain quietly in the state of sin, in spite of the remorse of his conscience, the example of Jesus Christ and the Saints, and the maxims of the holy Gospel.

101. The *inconstant* devotees are those who are devout to our Blessed Lady by intervals and whims. Sometimes they are fervent and sometimes lukewarm. Sometimes they seem ready to do any thing for her, and then, a little afterwards, they are not like the same people. They begin by taking up all the devotions to her, and enrolling themselves in the confraternities; and then they do not practise the rules with fidelity. They change like the moon; and Mary puts them under her feet with the crescent, because they are mutable, and unworthy to be reckoned among the servants of that faithful Virgin, whose clients have for their special graces fidelity and constancy. It were better for such persons to load themselves with fewer prayers and practices, and to fulfil them with faithfulness and love, in spite of the world, the devil, and the flesh.

102. We have still to mention the false devotees to our Blessed Lady, who are the *hypocritical* devotees; who cloke their sins and sinful habits under her mantle, in order to pass in the eyes of men for what they are not.

103. There are also the *interested* devotees, who have recourse to our Lady only to gain some lawsuit, or to avoid some danger, or to be cured of some illness, or for some other similar necessity, without which they would forget her altogether. Both, however, of these two last classes are false devotees, and neither of them pass current before God and His holy Mother.

104. Let us, then, take great care not to be of the number of the *critical* devotees, who believe nothing and criticise every thing; nor of the *scrupulous* devotees, who are afraid of being too devout to our Lady, out of respect to our Lord; nor of the *exterior* devotees, who make all their devotion consist in outward practices; nor of the *presumptuous* devotees, who, under the pretext of their false devotion to the Blessed Virgin, wallow in their sins; nor of the *inconstant* devotees, who by levity change their practices of devotion, or throw them up altogether on the least temptation; nor of the *hypocritical* devotees, who put themselves into confraternities, and wear the liveries of the Blessed Virgin, in order to pass for good people; nor, finally, of the *interested* devotees, who only have recourse to our Lady to be delivered from bodily evils, or to obtain temporal goods.

2. ON THE CHARACTERS OF TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED LADY

105. After having laid bare and condemned the false devotions to the most holy Virgin, we must, in a few words, characterise the true devotion. It must be (1) *interior*, (2) *tender*, (3) *holy*, (4) *constant*, and (5) *disinterested*.

106. § 1. True devotion to our Lady is *interior*; that is to say, it comes from the spirit and the heart. It flows from the esteem we have of her, the high idea we have formed of her greatness, and the love which we have for her.

107. § 2. It is *tender*; that is to say, full of confidence in her, like a child's confidence in his loving mother. This confidence makes the soul have recourse to her in all its bodily or mental necessities, with much simplicity, trust, and tenderness. It implores the aid of its good Mother, at all times, in all places, and about all things; in its doubts, that it may be enlightened; in its wanderings, that it may be brought into the right path; in its temptations, that it may be supported; in its weaknesses, that it may be strengthened; in its falls, that it may be lifted up; in its discouragements, that it may be cheered; in its scruples, that they may be taken away; in its crosses, toils, and disappointments of life, that it may be consoled under them. In a word, in all its evils of body and mind, the soul's ordinary refuge is in Mary, without fearing to be importunate to her or to displease Jesus Christ.

108. § 3. True devotion to our Lady is *holy*; that is to say, it leads the soul to avoid sin, and to imitate in the Blessed Virgin particularly her profound humility, her lively faith, her continual prayer, her universal mortification, her divine purity, her ardent charity, her heroic patience, her angelical sweetness, and her divine wisdom. These are the ten principal virtues of the most holy Virgin.

109. § 4. True devotion to our Lady is *constant*. It confirms the soul in good, and it does not let it easily abandon its spiritual exercises. It makes it courageous in opposing the world in its fashions and maxims, the flesh in its wearinesses and passions, and the devil in his temptations. So that a person truly devout to our Blessed Lady is neither changeable, irritable, scrupulous, nor timid. It is not that such a person does not fall, or change sometimes in the sensible feeling of devotion, or in the amount of devotion itself. But when he falls, he rises again by stretching out his hand to his good Mother. If he loses the taste and relish of devotion, he does not disturb himself because of that; for the just and faithful client of Mary lives on the faith of Jesus and Mary, and not on sentiments and sensibilities.

110. § 5. Lastly, true devotion to our Blessed Lady is *disinterested*; that is to say, it inspires the soul not to seek itself but God only, and God in His holy Mother. A true client of Mary does not serve that august Queen from a spirit of lucre and interest, nor for its own good, whether temporal, corporal, or spiritual; but exclusively because she merits to be served, and God alone in her. He does not love Mary precisely because she does him good, or because he hopes in her; but because she is so worthy of love. It is on this account that he loves and serves her as faithfully in his disgusts and drynesses, as in his sweetnesses and sensible fervours. He loves her as much on Calvary, as at the marriage of Cana. Oh! how such a client of our Blessed Lady, who has no self-seeking in his service of her, is agreeable and precious in the eyes of God and of His holy Mother! But in these days how rare is such a sight! It is that it may be less rare that I have taken my pen to put on paper what I have taught, in public and in private, during my missions for many years.

111. I have now said many things about the most holy Virgin; but I have many more to say, and there are infinitely more which I shall omit, whether from ignorance, inability, or want of time, in the design which I have to form a true client of Mary, and a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

112. Oh! but my labour will have been well expended if this little Writing, falling into the hands of a soul of good dispositions, a soul well born,—born of God and of Mary, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the

will of man,—should unfold to him, and should, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, inspire him with, the excellence and the price of that true and solid devotion to our Blessed Lady, which I am going presently to describe. If I knew that my guilty blood could serve in engraving upon any one's heart the truths which I am writing in honour of my true Mother and sovereign Mistress, I would use my blood instead of ink to form the letters, in the hope to find some good souls who, by their fidelity to the practice which I teach, shall compensate to my dear Mother and Mistress for the losses which she has suffered through my ingratitude and infidelities.

113. I feel myself more than ever animated to believe and to hope all which I have had deeply engraven upon my heart, and have asked of God these many years, namely, that sooner or later the Blessed Virgin shall have more children, servants, and slaves of love than ever; and that, by this means, Jesus Christ, my dear Master, shall reign more in hearts than ever.

114. I clearly foresee that raging beasts shall come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little Writing and him whom the Holy Ghost has made use of to write it, or at least to smother it in the silence of a coffer, that it may not appear. They shall even attack and persecute those who shall read it and carry it out in practice. But what matter? On the contrary, so much the better! This very foresight encourages me, and makes me hope for a great success; that is to say, for a great squadron of brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary, of both sexes, to combat the world, the devil, and corrupted nature in those more than ever perilous times which are about to come! *Qui legit, intelligat. Qui potest capere, capiat.*



PART II

ON THE MOST EXCELLENT DEVOTION TO
OUR BLESSED LADY, OR THE PERFECT
CONSECRATION TO JESUS BY MARY

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF HONOURING OUR BLESSED LADY

115. There are several interior practices of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Here are the principal of them stated compendiously. (1) To honour her as the worthy Mother of God, with the worship of hyperdulia; that is to say, to esteem her and honour her above all the other Saints, as the masterpiece of grace, and the first after Jesus Christ, true God and true Man; (2) to meditate her virtues, her privileges, and her actions; (3) to contemplate her grandeurs; (4) to make to her acts of love, of praise, of gratitude; (5) to invoke her cordially; (6) to offer ourselves to her, and unite ourselves with her; (7) to do all our actions with the view of pleasing her; (8) to begin, to continue, and to finish all our actions by her, in her, and with her, in order that we may do them by Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ our Last End. We will presently explain this last practice.

116. True devotion to our Lady has also several exterior practices, of which the following are the chief:—(1) to enrol ourselves in her confraternities, and enter her congregations; (2) to join the religious orders instituted in her honour; (3) to publish her praises; (4) to give alms, to fast, and to undergo outward and inward mortifications in her honour; (5) to wear her liveries, such as the rosary, the scapular, or the little chain; (6) to recite with attention, devotion, and modesty, the holy Rosary, composed of fifteen decades of Hail Marys in honour of the fifteen principal mysteries of Jesus Christ, or five decades, which is the third of the Rosary, either in honour of the five Joyous Mysteries, which are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Purification, and the Finding of our Lord in the Temple; or in honour of the five Sorrowful Mysteries, which are the Agony

of our Lord in the Garden of Olives, His Scourging, His Crowning with Thorns, His Carrying of the Cross, and His Crucifixion; or in honour of the five Glorious Mysteries, which are the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the Assumption of our Blessed Lady body and soul into Heaven, and her Coronation by the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. We may also say a Chaplet of six or seven decades in honour of the years which we believe our Lady lived on earth; or the little Corona of the Blessed Virgin, composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys, in honour of her crown of twelve stars, or privileges; or the Office of our Lady, so universally received and recited in the Church; or the Little Psalter of the holy Virgin, which St. Bonaventure has composed in her honour, and which is so tender and so devout that one cannot say it without being melted by it; or fourteen Our Fathers and Hail Marys in honour of her fourteen joys; or some other prayers, hymns, and canticles of the Church, such as the *Salve Regina*, the *Alma*, the *Ave Regina cælorum*, or the *Regina cæli*, according to the different seasons; or the *Ave Maris stella*, the *O gloriosa Domina*, the *Magnificat*, or some other practices of devotion of which books are full; (7) to sing or have sung spiritual canticles in her honour; (8) to make her a number of genuflections or reverences, while saying, for example, every morning, sixty or a hundred times *Ave Maria*, *Virgo fidelis*, to obtain from God the grace by her to be faithful to the graces of God during the day; and then again in the evening, *Ave Maria*, *Mater misericordiæ*, to ask pardon of God by her for the sins that we have committed during the day; (9) to take care of her confraternities, to adorn her altars, to crown and ornament her images; (10) to carry her images, or to have them carried, in procession, and to carry a picture or image of her about our own persons, as a mighty arm against the evil spirit; (11) to have her images or her name carved, and placed in churches, or in houses, or on the gates and entrances into cities, churches, and houses; (12) to consecrate ourselves to her in a special and solemn manner.

117. There are a quantity of other practices of true devotion towards the Blessed Virgin which the Holy Ghost has inspired into saintly souls, and which are very sanctifying; they can be read at length in the *Paradise opened* of Fr. Barry, the Jesuit, where he has collected a great number of

devotions which the Saints have practised in honour of our Lady, devotions which serve marvellously to sanctify souls, provided they are performed as they ought to be; that is to say, (1) with a good and pure intention to please God only, to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ as to our Last End, and to edify our neighbour; (2) with attention, and without voluntary distraction; (3) with devotion, equally avoiding precipitation or negligence; (4) with modesty, and a respectful and edifying care of the postures of the body.

118. But after all, I loudly protest that, having read nearly all the books which profess to treat of devotion to our Lady, and having conversed familiarly and holily with the best and wisest of men of these latter times, I have never known nor heard of any practice of devotion towards her at all equal to the one which I wish now to unfold; exacting from the soul as it does more sacrifices for God, emptying the soul more of itself and of its self-love, keeping it more faithfully in grace, and grace more faithfully in it, uniting it more perfectly and more easily to Jesus Christ; and finally, being more glorious to God, more sanctifying to the soul, and more useful to our neighbour, than any other of the devotions to her.

119. As the essential of this devotion consists in the interior which it ought to form, it will not be equally comprehended by every body. Some will stop at what is exterior in it, and will go no further, and these will be the greatest number. Some, in small number, will enter into its inward spirit; but they will only mount but one step. Who will mount to the second step? Who will get as far as the third? Lastly, who will so advance as to make this devotion his habitual *state*? He alone to whom the spirit of Jesus Christ shall have revealed the secret, the faultlessly faithful soul, whom He shall conduct there Himself, to advance from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, from light to light, until he arrives at the transformation of himself into Jesus Christ, and to the plentitude of His age on earth, and of His glory in heaven.

I. IN WHAT CONSISTS THE PERFECT CONSECRATION TO JESUS CHRIST BY MARY

120. All our perfection consists in being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ; and therefore the most perfect of all devotions is, without any doubt, that which the most perfectly conforms, unites, and consecrates us to Jesus Christ. Now, Mary being the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms the soul to our Lord is devotion to His holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more is it consecrated to Jesus. Hence it comes to pass, that the most perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing else but a perfect and entire consecration of ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, and this is the devotion which I teach; or in other words, a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy Baptism.

121. This devotion consists, then, in giving ourselves entirely and altogether to our Lady, in order to belong entirely and altogether to Jesus by her. We must give her (1) our body, with all its senses and its members; (2) our soul, with all its powers; (3) the exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future. In a word, we must give her all we have in the order of nature and in the order of grace, and all that may become ours in future in the orders of nature, grace, and glory; and this we must do without any reserve of so much as one farthing, one hair, or one least good action; and we must do it also for all eternity, and we must do it further without pretending to, or hoping for, any other recompense for our offering and service, except the honour of belonging to

Jesus Christ by Mary and in Mary, even though that sweet Mistress were not, as she always is, the most generous and the most grateful of creatures.

122. Here we must remark, that there are two things in the good works which we do, namely, satisfaction and merit; in other words, their satisfactory or impetratory value, and their meritorious value. The satisfactory or impetratory value of a good work is the good action, so far as it satisfies for the pain due to sin, or obtains some fresh increase of grace; the meritorious value, or the merit, is the good action, so far as it merits grace now and eternal glory hereafter. Now, in this consecration of ourselves to our Lady, we give her all the satisfactory, impetratory, and meritorious value of our actions; in other words, the satisfactions and merits of all our good works. We give her all our merits, graces, and virtues, not to communicate them to others,—for our merits, graces, and virtues are, properly speaking, incommunicable, and it is only Jesus Christ, who, in making Himself our surety with His Father, is able to communicate His merits,—but we give her them to keep them, augment them, and embellish them for us, as we shall explain by and by. But we give her our satisfactions to communicate them to whom she likes, and for the greatest glory of God.

123. It follows from this, that;

§ 1. By this devotion, we give to Jesus Christ, in the most perfect manner, inasmuch as it is by Mary's hands, all we can give Him, and far more than by any other devotions, in which we give Him either part of our time, or a part of our good works, or a part of our satisfactions and mortifications; whereas here every thing is given and consecrated to Him, even to the right of disposing of our interior goods, and of the satisfactions which we gain by our good works daily. This is more than we do even in a religious order. In religious orders we give God the goods of fortune by the vow of poverty, the goods of the body by the vow of chastity, our own will by the vow of obedience, and sometimes the liberty of the body by the vow of cloister. But we do not by those vows give Him the liberty or the right to dispose of the value of our good works; and we do not strip ourselves, as far as a Christian man can do so, of that which is dearest and most precious to Him, namely, his merits and satisfactions.

124. § 2. A person who is thus voluntarily consecrated and sacrificed to Jesus Christ by Mary can no longer dispose of the value of any of his good actions. All he suffers, all he thinks, all the good he says or does, belongs to Mary, in order that she may dispose of it according to the will of her Son, and His greatest glory, without, however, that dependence prejudicing in any way the obligations of the state we may be in at present, or may be placed in for the future; for example, without prejudicing the obligations of a priest, who, by his office or otherwise, ought to apply the satisfactory or impetratory value of the holy Mass to some private person; for we make the offering of this devotion only according to the order of God and the duties of our state.

125. § 3. We consecrate ourselves at one and the same time to the most holy Virgin and to Jesus Christ: to the most holy Virgin, as to the perfect means which Jesus Christ has chosen, whereby to unite Himself to us, and us to Him; and to our Lord, as to our Last End, to whom we owe all we are, as our Redeemer and our God.

126. I have said that this devotion may most justly be called a perfect renewal of the vows or promises of holy Baptism. For every Christian, before his Baptism, was the slave of the devil, seeing that he belonged to him. He has in his Baptism, by his own mouth or by his sponsor's, solemnly renounced Satan, his pomps and his works; and he has taken Jesus Christ for his Master and Sovereign Lord, to depend upon Him in the quality of a slave of love. This is what we do by the present devotion. We renounce, as is expressed in the formula of consecration, the devil, the world, sin, and self; and we give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary. Nay, we even do something more; for, in Baptism, we ordinarily speak by the mouth of another, namely, by our godfather or godmother, and so we give ourselves to Jesus Christ not by ourselves but through another. But in this devotion we do it by ourselves, voluntarily, knowing what we are doing. Moreover, in holy Baptism, we do not give ourselves to Jesus by the hands of Mary, at least not in an expressed manner; and we do not give Him the value of our good actions. We remain entirely free after Baptism, either to apply them to whom we please or to keep them for ourselves. But, by this

devotion, we give ourselves to our Lord expressly by the hands of Mary, and we consecrate to Him the value of all our actions.

127. Men, says St. Thomas, make a vow at their Baptism to renounce the devil and all his pomps,—“*In Baptismo vovent homines abrenuntiare diabolo et pompis ejus.*” This vow, says St. Augustine, is the greatest and most indispensable of all vows,—“*Votum maximum nostrum, quo vovimus nos in Christo esse mansuros.*” It is thus also that canonists speak: “*Præcipuum votum est, quod in Baptismate facimus.*” Yet who has kept this great vow? Who is it that faithfully performs the promises of holy Baptism? Have not almost all Christians swerved from the loyalty which they promised Jesus in their Baptism? Whence can come this universal disobedience, except from our oblivion of the promises and engagements of holy Baptism, and from the fact that hardly any one ratifies of himself the contract he made with God by those who stood sponsors for him?

128. This is so true, that the Council of Sens, convoked by order of Louis the Débonnaire to remedy the disorders of Christians, which were then so great, judged that the principal cause of that corruption of morals arose from the oblivion and ignorance in which men lived of the engagements of holy Baptism; and it could think of no better means for remedying so great an evil than to persuade Christians to renew the vows and promises of Baptism.

129. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, the faithful interpreter of that holy Council, exhorts the parish-priests to do the same thing; and to induce the people to remember themselves, and to believe that they are bound and consecrated to our Lord Jesus Christ, as slaves to their Redeemer and Lord. These are its words: “*Parochus fidelem ad eam rationem cohortabitur ut sciat æquissimum esse . . . nos ipsos non secus ac mancipio Redemptori nostro ac Domino in perpetuum addicere et consecrare*” (Cat. Conc. Trid. par. i. c. iii. sec. 4).

130. Now if the Councils, the Fathers, and experience even, show us that the best means of remedying the irregularities of Christians is by making them call to mind the obligations of their Baptism, and persuading them to

renew now the vows they made then, does it not stand to reason that we shall do it in a perfect manner, by this devotion and consecration of ourselves to our Lord, through His holy Mother? I say in a perfect manner; because in thus consecrating ourselves to Him we make use of the most perfect of all means, namely, the Blessed Virgin.

131. No one can object to this devotion as either a new or an indifferent one. It is not new; because the Councils, the Fathers, and many authors both ancient and modern, speak of this consecration to our Lord, in renewing the vows and promises of Baptism, as of a thing anciently practised, and which they counsel to all Christians. Neither is it a matter of indifference; because the principal source of all disorders, and consequently of the eternal perdition of Christians, comes from their forgetfulness and indifference about this practice.

132. But some may object that this devotion, in making us give to our Lord by our Lady's hands the value of all our good works, prayers, mortifications, and alms, puts us into a state of incapacity for succouring the souls of our parents, friends, and benefactors.

I answer them as follows: (1) That it is not credible that our parents, friends, and benefactors, should suffer any damage from the fact of our being devoted and consecrated without exception to the service of our Lord and His holy Mother. To think this, would be to think unworthily of the goodness and power of Jesus and Mary, who know well how to assist our parents, friends, and benefactors out of our own little spiritual revenue, or by other ways. (2) This practice does not hinder us from praying for others, whether dead or living, although the application of our good works depends on the will of our Blessed Lady. On the contrary, it is this very thing which will lead us to pray with more confidence; just as a rich person, who has given all his wealth to his prince, in order to honour him the more, would beg the prince all the more confidently to give an alms to one of his friends who should demand it. It would even be conferring a fresh favour on the prince, and giving him a fresh pleasure, to give him an occasion of testifying his gratitude towards a person who stripped himself to clothe him, and who impoverished himself to honour him. We must say the same of our

Blessed Lord and of our Lady. They will never let themselves be overcome in gratitude.

133. Some one, perhaps, may say, If I give our Blessed Lady all the value of my actions to apply it to whom she wills, I shall have to suffer, perhaps, a long time in purgatory. This objection, which comes from self-love, and ignorance of the generosity of God and His holy Mother, demolishes itself. A fervent and generous soul, who prizes the interests of God more than his own; who gives God all he has, without reserve, so that he can do nothing more; who breathes only the glory and reign of Jesus Christ by His holy Mother, and who makes an entire sacrifice of himself to bring it about,—will this generous and liberal soul, I say, be more punished in the other world because it has been more liberal and more disinterested than others? Far, indeed, will that be from the truth! It is towards that soul, as we shall see in conclusion, that our Lord and His holy Mother are most liberal in this world and in the other, in the orders of nature, grace, and glory.

134. But we must now, as briefly as we can, run over the motives which ought to recommend this devotion to us, the marvellous effects it produces in the souls of the faithful, and its practices.



II. THE MOTIVES OF THIS PERFECT CONSECRATION

FIRST MOTIVE

135. The First Motive, which shows us the excellence of this consecration of ourselves by the hands of Mary. If we can conceive on earth no employment more lofty than the service of God,—if the least servant of God is richer, more powerful, and more noble, than all the kings and emperors of earth, unless they also are the servants of God,—what must be the riches, the power, and the dignity, of the faithful and perfect servant of God, who is devoted to His service, entirely and without reserve, to the utmost extent that is possible! Such is the faithful and loving slave of Jesus in Mary, who has given himself up utterly to the service of that King of kings, by the hands of His holy Mother, and has reserved nothing for himself. Not all the gold of earth, nor all the beauties of the heavens, can repay him.

136. The other congregations, associations, and confraternities, erected in honour of our Lord and His holy Mother, and which do such immense good in Christendom, do not make us give every thing without reserve. They only prescribe to their members certain practices and actions to satisfy their obligations. They leave them free for all the other actions and times of their lives. But this devotion makes us give to Jesus and Mary, without reserve, all our thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings, all the times of our life, in such sort that whether we wake or sleep, whether we eat or drink, whether we do great actions or very little ones, it is always true to say that whatever we do, even without thinking of it, is, by virtue of our offering, at least if it has not been expressly retracted, done for Jesus and Mary. What a consolation is this!

137. Moreover, as I have already said, there is no other practice equal to this for enabling us to get rid with facility of a certain proprietorship, which imperceptibly insinuates itself into our best actions. Our good Jesus gives us this great grace in recompense for the heroic and disinterested action of making a cession to Him, by the hands of His holy Mother, of all the value of our good works. If He gives a hundredfold even in this world to those who for His love quit outward and temporal and perishable goods, what will that hundredfold be which He will give to the man who sacrifices for Him even his inward and spiritual goods!

138. Jesus, our great friend, has given Himself to us without reserve, body and soul, virtues, graces, and merits. *Se toto totum me comparavit*, said St. Bernard,—“He has bought the whole of me by the whole of Himself.” Is it not, then, a simple matter of justice and of gratitude that we should give Him all that we can give Him? He has been the first to be liberal towards us; let us, at least, be the second; and then, in life and death, and throughout all eternity, we shall find Him still more liberal. *Cum liberali liberalis erit*.

SECOND MOTIVE

139. The second Motive, which shows us how just it is in itself, and advantageous to Christians, to consecrate themselves entirely to the Blessed Virgin by this practice, in order to belong more perfectly to Jesus Christ.

This good Master has not disdained to shut Himself up in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, as a captive and as a loving slave, and to be subject and obedient to her for thirty years. It is here, I repeat it, that the human mind loses itself when it seriously reflects on the conduct of the Incarnate Wisdom, who has not willed, though He might have done so, to give Himself to men directly, but through the Blessed Virgin. He did not will to come into the world at the age of a perfect man, independent of others, but like a poor and little babe, dependent on the cares and nourishment of this holy Mother. He is that Infinite Wisdom, who had a boundless desire to glorify God His Father, and to save men; and yet He found no more perfect means, no shorter way to do it, than to submit Himself in all things to the Blessed Virgin, not only during the first eight, ten, or fifteen years of His

life, like other children, but for thirty years! He gave more glory to God His Father during all that time of submission and dependence to our Blessed Lady than He would have given Him if He had employed those thirty years in working miracles, in preaching to the whole earth, and in converting all men, seeing that His heavenly Father and Himself had ruled it thus: *Quæ placita sunt ei, facio semper*. Oh! how highly we glorify God, when, after the example of Jesus, we submit ourselves to Mary!

Having, then, before our eyes an example so plain and so well known to the whole world, are we so senseless as to imagine that we can find a more perfect or a shorter means of glorifying God than that of submitting ourselves to Mary, after the example of her Son?

140. Let us recall here, as a proof of the dependence we ought to have on our Blessed Lady, what I have said above in bringing forward the example which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost give of this dependence. The Father has not given, and does not give, His Son except by her; He has no children but by her, and communicates no graces but by her. God the Son has not been formed for the whole world in general except by her; and He is not daily formed and engendered except by her, in the union with the Holy Ghost; neither does He communicate His merits and His virtues except by her. The Holy Ghost has not formed Jesus Christ except by her; neither does He form the members of our Lord's Mystical Body except by her; and through her alone does He dispense His favours and His gifts. After so many and such pressing examples of the Most Holy Trinity, can we, without an extreme blindness, dispense ourselves from Mary, and not consecrate ourselves to her, and depend on her to go to God, and to sacrifice ourselves to God?

141. Here are some Latin passages of the Fathers, which I have chosen to prove what has just been said:

“Duo filii Mariæ sunt, homo Deus et homo purus, unius corporaliter, et alterius spiritualiter Mater est Maria” (St. Bonaventure and Origen).

“Hæc est voluntas Dei, qui totum nos voluit habere per Mariam, ac proinde si quid spei, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare” (St. Bernard).

“Omnia dona, virtutes gratiae ipsius Spiritus Sancti, quibus vult, et quandò vult, quomodò vult, et quantum vult, per ipsius manus administrantur” (St. Bernardin).

“Quia indignus eras cui donaretur, datum est Mariæ, ut per illam acciperes quidquid haberes” (St. Bernard).

142. God, says St. Bernard, seeing that we are unworthy to receive His graces immediately from His own hand, gives them to Mary, in order that we may have through her whatever He wills to give us; and He also finds His glory in receiving through the hands of Mary the gratitude, respect, and love, which we owe Him for His benefits. It is most just, then, that we should imitate this conduct of God, in order, as the same St. Bernard says, that the grace should return to its Author by the same canal through which it came: *Ut eodem alveo ad largitorem gratiæ gratia redeat, quo fluxit.*

This is precisely what our devotion does. We offer and consecrate all we are and all we have to the Blessed Virgin, in order that our Lord may receive through her mediation the glory and the gratitude which we owe Him. We acknowledge ourselves unworthy and unfit to approach His Infinite Majesty by ourselves; and it is on this account that we avail ourselves of the intercession of the most holy Virgin.

143. Moreover, this devotion is a practice of great humility, which God loves above all the other virtues. A soul which exalts itself abases God; a soul which abases itself exalts God. God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble. If you abase yourself, thinking yourself unworthy to appear before Him and to draw nigh to Him, He descends, and lowers Himself to come to you, to take pleasure in you, and to exalt you in spite of yourself.

On the contrary, when you are hardy enough to approach God without a mediator, God flies from you, and you cannot reach Him. Oh, how He loves humility of heart! It is to this humility that our peculiar devotion engages us, because it teaches us never to draw nigh of ourselves to our Lord, however sweet and merciful He may be, but always to avail ourselves of the intercession of our Blessed Lady, whether it be to appear before God, or to speak to Him, or to draw near to Him, or to offer Him any thing, or to unite and consecrate ourselves to Him.

THIRD MOTIVE

144. § 1. The most holy Virgin, who is a Mother of sweetness and mercy, and who never lets herself be vanquished in love and liberality, seeing that we give ourselves entirely to her, to honour and to serve her, and for that end strip ourselves of all that is dearest to us in order to adorn her, meets us in the same spirit. She also gives her whole self, and gives it in an unspeakable manner, to him who gives all to her. She causes him to be engulfed in the abyss of her graces. She adorns him with her merits; she supports him with her power; she illuminates him with her light; she inflames him with her love; she communicates to him her virtues, her humility, her faith, her purity, and the rest. She makes herself his bail, his supplement, and his dear all towards Jesus. In a word, as that person is all consecrated to Mary, so is Mary all for him; after such a fashion that we can say of that perfect servant and child of Mary what St. John the Evangelist said of himself, that he took the holy Virgin for all his goods,—*Accepit eam discipulus in sua*.

145. It is this which produces in the soul, if it is faithful, a great distrust, contempt, and hatred of self, and a great confidence and a great self-abandonment in the Blessed Virgin, its good Mistress. A man no longer, as before, leans on his own dispositions, intentions, merits, and good works; because, having made an entire sacrifice of them to Jesus Christ by that good Mother, he has but one treasure now, where all his goods are laid up, and that is no longer in himself; for his treasure is Mary. It is this which makes him approach our Lord without servile or scrupulous fear, and pray to Him with great confidence. It is this which makes him enter into the sentiments of the devout and learned Abbot Rupert, who, making an allusion to the victory that Jacob gained over the angel, said to our Blessed Lady these beautiful words: “O Mary, my Princess, Immaculate Mother of a God-man, Jesus Christ, I desire to wrestle with that Man, namely, the Divine Word, not armed with my own merits, but with yours.” *O Domina, Dei genitrix Maria, et incorrupta Mater Dei et Hominis, non meis, sed tuis armatus meritis, cum isto Viro, seu Verbo Dei, luctari cupio* (Rup. Prolog. in Cantic.).

Oh, how strong and mighty we are with Jesus Christ, when we are armed with the worthy merits and intercession of the Mother of God, who, as St. Augustine says, has lovingly vanquished the Most High.

146. § 2. As by this practice we give to our Lord by His Mother's hands all our good works, that good Mother purifies them, embellishes them, and makes them acceptable to her Son.

(1) She purifies them of all the soil of self-love, and of that imperceptible attachment to the creature, which slips incessantly into our best actions. As soon as they are in her most pure and fruitful hands, those same hands, which have never been sullied or idle, and which purify whatever they touch, take away from the present which we make to her all that was spoilt or imperfect about it.

147. (2) She embellishes our works, in adorning them with her own merits and virtues. It is as if a peasant, wishing to gain the friendship and benevolence of the king, went to the queen, and presented her with a fruit, which was his whole revenue, in order that she might present it to the king. The queen, having accepted the poor little offering from the peasant, would place the fruit on a large and beautiful dish of gold, and so, on the peasant's behalf, would present it to the king. Then the fruit, however unworthy in itself to be a king's present, would become worthy of his majesty, because of the dish of gold on which it rested and the person who presented it.

148. (3) She presents these good works to Jesus Christ; for she keeps nothing of what is given for herself, as if she was our last end. She refers it all faithfully to Jesus. If we give to her, we give necessarily to Jesus; if we praise her or glorify her, we at once praise and glorify Jesus. As of old, when St. Elizabeth praised her, so now, when we praise and bless her, she sings herself, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*.

149. (4) She persuades Jesus to accept these good works, however little and poor the present may be for that Saint of saints and that King of kings. When we present any thing to Jesus by ourselves, and relying on our own industry and disposition, Jesus examines the offering, and often rejects it

because of the stains it has contracted through self-love; just as of old He rejected the sacrifices of the Jews when they were full of their own will. But when we present Him any thing by the pure and virginal hands of His Well-beloved, we take Him by His weak side, if it is allowable to use such a term. He does not consider so much the thing that is given Him, as the Mother who gives it. He does not consider so much whence the offering comes, as by whom it comes. Thus Mary, who is never repelled and always well received by her Son, makes everything she presents to Him, great or small, acceptable to His Majesty. For Jesus to receive it and to take complacency in it, it is enough that Mary should present it. This is the great counsel which St. Bernard used to give to those whom he conducted to perfection: “When you want to offer any thing to God, take care to offer it by the most agreeable and worthy hands of Mary, unless you wish to have it rejected,”—*Modicum quod offerre desideras manibus Mariæ offerendum tradere cura, si non vis sustinere repulsam.*

150. Is not this what nature itself suggests to the little, with regard to the great, as we have already seen? Why should not grace lead us to do the same thing with regard to God, who is infinitely exalted above us, and before whom we are less than atoms? seeing, moreover, that we have an advocate so powerful that she is never refused; so full of inventions, that she knows all the secret ways of gaining the heart of God; and so good and charitable, that she repels no one, however little and wretched he may be.

I shall bring forward presently the true figure of these truths in the history of Jacob and Rebecca.

FOURTH MOTIVE

151. This devotion, faithfully practised, is an excellent means of making sure that the value of all our good works shall be employed for the greatest glory of God. Scarcely any one acts for that noble end, although we are all under an obligation to do so. Either we do not know where the greatest glory of God is to be found, or we do not wish to find it. But our Blessed Lady, to whom we cede the value and the merit of the good works we may do, knows most perfectly where the greatest glory of God is to be found;

and, inasmuch as she never does any thing except for the greatest glory of God, a perfect servant of that good Mistress, who is wholly consecrated to her, may say with the hardest assurance, that the value of all his actions, thoughts, and words, is employed for the greatest glory of God, at least unless he expressly revokes his offering. Is there any consolation equal to this, for a soul who loves God with a pure and disinterested love, and who prizes the glory and interests of God far beyond his own?

FIFTH MOTIVE

152. This devotion is an *easy, short, perfect, and secure* way of arriving at union with our Lord, in which the perfection of a Christian consists.

§ 1. It is an *easy* way. It is the way which Jesus Christ Himself trod in coming to us, and in which there is no obstacle in arriving at Him. It is true that we can attain to divine union by other roads; but it is by many more crosses, and strange deaths, and with many more difficulties, which we shall find it hard to overcome. We must pass through obscure nights, through combats, through strange agonies, over craggy mountains, through cruel thorns, and over frightful deserts. But, by the path of Mary, we pass more gently and more tranquilly. We do find, it is true, great battles to fight, and great hardships to master; but that good Mother and Mistress makes herself so present and so near to her faithful servants, to enlighten them in their darkneses and their doubts, to strengthen them in their fears, and to sustain them in their struggles and their difficulties, that in truth this virginal path to find Jesus Christ is a path of roses and honey compared with the other paths. There have been some Saints, but they have been in small numbers, who have passed by this sweet path to go to Jesus, because the Holy Ghost, faithful Spouse of Mary, has by a singular grace disclosed it to them. Such were St. Ephrem, St. John Damascene, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Bonaventure, St. Francis of Sales, and others. But the rest of the Saints, who are the greater number, although they have all had devotion to our Blessed Lady, have not on that account, or at least very little, entered upon this way. This is why they have had to pass through ruder and more dangerous trials.

153. How comes it, then, some of the faithful servants of Mary will say to me, that the loyal clients of this good Mother have so many occasions of suffering, nay, even more than others who are not so devout to her? They are contradicted, they are persecuted, they are calumniated, the world cannot endure them; or, again, they walk in interior darknesses, and in deserts where there is not the least drop of the dew of heaven. If this devotion to our Blessed Lady makes the road to Jesus easier, how comes it that they who follow it are the most despised of men?

154. I reply, that it is quite true that the most faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin, being also her greatest favourites, receive from her the greatest graces and favours of heaven, which are crosses. But I maintain that it is also the servants of Mary who carry these crosses with more facility, more merit, and more glory. That which would stay the progress of another a thousand times over, or perhaps would make him fall, does not once arrest their steps, but rather enables them to advance; because that good Mother, all full of the graces and unction of the Holy Ghost, preserves all the crosses, which she cuts for them, in the sugar of her maternal sweetness, so that they swallow them gaily, like preserved fruits, however bitter they may be in themselves; and I believe that a person who wishes to be devout, and to live piously in Jesus Christ, and consequently to suffer persecutions, and carry his cross daily, will never carry great crosses, or carry them joyously or perseveringly, without a tender devotion to our Lady, which is the sweetmeat and confection of crosses; just as a person would not be able to eat unripe fruits, without a great effort which he could hardly keep up, unless they had been preserved in sugar.

155. § 2. This devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a *short* road to find Jesus Christ, both because it is a road which we do not stray from, and because, as I have just said, it is a road we tread with joy and facility, and by consequence with promptitude. We make more progress in a brief period of submission to, and dependence on, Mary than in whole years of our own will, and of resting upon ourselves. A man obedient and submissive to Mary shall sing the signal victories which he shall gain over his enemies. They will try to hinder his advancing, or to make him retrace his steps, or to fall. This is true. But with the support, the aid, and the guidance of Mary,

without falling, without drawing back one step, without even slackening his pace, he shall advance with giant strides towards Jesus, along the same path by which he knows that Jesus also came to us with giant strides, and in the briefest space of time.

156. Why do you think that Jesus lived so short a time on earth, and of those few years spent nearly all of them in subjection and obedience to His Mother? Ah, this is the truth: that He was perfected indeed in a short time, but that he lived a long time, longer than Adam, whose fall He had come to repair, although the patriarch lived above nine hundred years. Jesus Christ lived a long time, because He lived in complete subjection to His holy Mother, and closely united with her, in order that He might thus obey God His Father. For the Holy Ghost says that a man who honours his mother is like a man who layeth up a treasure; that is to say, he who honours Mary his Mother, up to the point of subjecting himself to her and obeying her in all things, will soon become exceedingly rich, (1) because he is every day amassing treasures, by the secret of that philosopher's-stone,—*Qui honorat matrem quasi qui thesaurizat*; (2) because it is the bosom of Mary which has surrounded and engendered a perfect man, and has had the capacity of containing Him whom the whole universe could neither contain nor comprehend,—it is, I say, in the bosom of Mary that they who are youthful become elders in light, in holiness, in experience, and in wisdom; and that we arrive in a few years at the fulness of the age of Jesus Christ.

157. § 3. This practice of devotion to our Blessed Lady is also a *perfect* path by which to go and unite ourselves to Jesus, because the divine Mary is the most perfect and the most holy of creatures, and because Jesus, who has come to us most perfectly, took no other road for His great and admirable journey. The Most High, the Incomprehensible, the Inaccessible, He Who Is, has deigned to come to us, little worms of earth who are nothing. How has He done this? The Most High has come down to us perfectly and divinely by the humble Mary. He has come to us by her, without losing any thing of His divinity and sanctity. So it is by Mary that the unspeakably little are to ascend, perfectly and divinely, without any fear, to the Most High. The Incomprehensible has allowed Himself to be comprehended and perfectly contained by the little Mary, without losing any thing of His

immensity. So also is it by the little Mary that we must let ourselves be held and guided perfectly without any reserve. The Inaccessible has drawn near to us, and has closely united Himself to us, perfectly, and even personally, to our humanity, by Mary, without losing any of His Majesty. So also is it by Mary that we must draw near to God, and unite ourselves perfectly and closely to His Majesty, without fear of being repulsed. In a word, He Who Is has designed to come to that which is not, and to make that which is not become God in Him Who Is; and He has done this perfectly in giving Himself and subjecting Himself entirely to the young Virgin Mary without ceasing to be in time He who is eternal. In like manner it is by Mary that we, who are nothing, can become like to God by grace and glory, by giving ourselves to her so perfectly and entirely as to be nothing in ourselves but every thing in her, without fear of delusion.

158. Make for me, if you will, a new road to go to Jesus, and pave it with all the merits of the Blessed, adorn it with all their heroic virtues, illuminate and embellish it with all the lights and beauties of the Angels, and let all the Angels and Saints be there themselves to escort, defend, and sustain those who are ready to walk there; and yet in truth, in simple truth, I say boldly, and I repeat that I say truly, I would prefer to this new perfect path the immaculate way of Mary. *Posui immaculatam viam meam*. It is the way without any stain or spot, without original or actual sin, without shadow or darkness. When my sweet Jesus in His glory comes a second time on earth, as it is most certain He will do, to reign there, He will choose no other way for His journey than the divine Mary, by whom He came the first time so surely and so perfectly. But there will be a difference between His first and His last coming. The first time He came secretly and hiddenly; the second time He will come gloriously and resplendently. But both times He will come perfectly, because both times He will come by Mary. Alas, here is a mystery which is not understood. *Hic taceat omnis lingua*.

159. § 4. This devotion to our Blessed Lady is also a *secure* way to go to Jesus, and to acquire perfection by uniting us to Him.

(1) It is a secure way, because the practice which I am teaching is not new. M. Boudon, Who died a little while ago in the odour of sanctity, says, in a

book which he composed on this devotion, that it is so ancient we cannot fix precisely the date of its commencement. It is, however, certain that for more than seven hundred years we find traces of it in the Church. St. Odilon, the abbot of Cluny, who lived about the year 1040, was one of the first who publicly practised it in France; as is remarked in his life. Cardinal Peter Damien relates that, in the year 1036, the Blessed Marino, his brother, made himself a slave of the Blessed Virgin in the presence of his director, in a most edifying manner. He put a rope round his neck, took the discipline, and laid on the altar a sum of money, to mark his devotion and consecration to our Lady; and he continued this devotion so faithfully during his whole life, that he deserved to be visited and consoled at his death by his good Mistress, and to receive from her mouth the promise of Paradise in recompense for his services.

Cesarius Bollandus mentions an illustrious cavalier, Vautier de Birbac, who, about the year 1500, consecrated himself to the Blessed Virgin. This devotion was also practised by several private persons up to the seventeenth century, when it became public.

160. Father Simon de Roxas, of the Order of the Redemption of Captives, and preacher of Philip the Third, made this devotion popular in Spain and Germany; and through the instance of Philip the Third, he obtained of Gregory the Fifteenth ample indulgences for those who practised it. Father de Los Rios, the Augustinian, devoted himself, with his intimate friend, Father Roxas, to spread this devotion, both by preaching and writing, through Spain and Germany. He composed a thick volume, called *Hierarchia Mariana*, in which he treats, with as much piety as learning, of the antiquity, excellence, and solidity of this devotion.

161. The Theatin Fathers, in the seventeenth century, established this devotion in Italy, Sicily, and Savoy. Father Stanislas Phalacius, the Jesuit, increased this devotion wonderfully in Poland. Father de Los Rios, in his work just cited, quotes the names of princes, princesses, dukes, and cardinals, of different kingdoms, who embraced this devotion.

Cornelius à Lapedo, as much recommended for his piety as for his profound erudition, having received a commission from several theologians to examine this devotion, did so with great maturity and deliberation, and praised it in a manner which we might have expected from his well-known piety; and many other distinguished persons have followed his example.

The Jesuit Fathers, always zealous in the service of our Blessed Lady, presented, in the name of the Congreganists of Cologne, a little treatise on this devotion to the Duke Ferdinand of Bavaria, who was then Archbishop of Cologne. He gave it his approbation, and permission to print it; and exhorted all the parish-priests and religious of his diocese to promote the devotion as much as ever they could.

162. Cardinal Berulle, whose memory is in benediction through all France, was one of the most zealous in spreading this devotion in that country, in spite of all the calumnies and persecutions which he suffered from critics and libertines. They accused him of novelty and superstition. They wrote and published against him, a libel in order to defame him; and they made use, or rather it was the devil by their ministry, of a thousand subtleties to hinder his spreading the devotion in France. But that great and holy man only answered their calumnies by his patience; and he met the objections contained in their libel by a short treatise, in which he most convincingly refuted them. He showed them that the devotion was founded on the example of Jesus Christ, on the obligations which we have to Him, and on the vows which we have made in holy Baptism. It was chiefly by this last reason that he shut his adversaries' mouths, making them see that this consecration to the holy Virgin, and to Jesus Christ by her hands, is nothing else than a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of Baptism. He has said many beautiful things on this practice, which can be read in his works.

163. We may also see in M. Boudon's book the different Popes who have approved this devotion, the theologians who have examined it, the persecutions they have undergone and have overcome, and the thousands of persons who have embraced it, without any Pope having ever condemned it. Indeed, we cannot see how it could be condemned without overturning the foundations of Christianity. It is clear, then, that this devotion is not new;

and that if it is not common, it is because it is too precious to be relished and practised by all the world.⁴

164. (2) This devotion is a secure means of going to Jesus Christ, because it is the very characteristic of our Blessed Lady to conduct us surely to Jesus, just as it is the very characteristic of Jesus to conduct us surely to the Eternal Father. Spiritual persons, therefore, must not fall into the false belief that Mary can be a hindrance to them in attaining to divine union; for is it possible that she who has found grace before God for the whole world in general, and for each one in particular, should be a hindrance to a soul in finding the great grace of union with Him? Can it be possible that she who has been all full and superabounding with graces, so united and transformed into God that it has been a kind of necessity that He should be incarnate in her, should be a stumbling-block in the way of a soul's perfect union with God? It is quite true that the view of other creatures, however holy, may perhaps at certain times retard divine union. But this cannot be said of Mary, as I have remarked before, and shall never weary of repeating. One reason why so few souls come to the fulness of the age of Jesus Christ is because Mary, who is as much as ever the Mother of the Son, and as much as ever the fruitful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, is not sufficiently formed in their hearts. He who wishes to have the fruit well ripened and well formed must have the tree that produces it; he who wishes to have the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, must have the tree of life, which is Mary; he who wishes to have in himself the operation of the Holy Ghost must have His faithful and indissoluble Spouse, the divine Mary, who makes Him fertile and fruit-bearing, as we have said elsewhere.

165. Be persuaded, then, that the more you look at Mary in your prayers, contemplations, actions, and sufferings, if not with a distinct and definite view, at least with a general and imperceptible one, the more perfectly will you find Jesus Christ, who is always with Mary, great, powerful, operative, and incomprehensible.

Thus, so far from the divine Mary, all absorbed in God, being an obstacle to the perfect in their attaining to union with God, there has never been up to this point, and there never will be, any creature who will aid us more

efficaciously in this great work, whether by the graces she will communicate to us for this effect,—for, as a Saint has said, no one can be filled with the thought of God except by her, *Nemo cogitatione Dei repletur, nisi per te*,—or whether by freedom from the illusions and trickeries of the evil spirit, which she will guarantee to us.

166. Where Mary is, there the evil spirit is not. One of the most infallible marks we can have of our being conducted by the good Spirit is our being very devout to Mary, our thinking often of her, and our speaking often of her.

This last is the thought of a Saint, who adds, that as respiration is a certain sign the body is not dead, the frequent thought and loving invocation of Mary is a certain sign the soul is not dead by sin.

167. As it is Mary alone, says the Church (and the Holy Ghost, who guides the Church), who alone makes all heresies come to naught,—*Sola cunctas hæreses interemisti in universo mundo*,—we may be sure that, however critics may grumble, no faithful client of Mary will ever fall into heresy or illusion, at least formal. He may very well err materially, take falsehood for truth, and the evil spirit for the good; and yet he will do even this with more difficulty than others. But sooner or later he will acknowledge his material fault and error; and when he knows it, he will not be in any way self-opinionated in believing and maintaining what he had once thought true.

168. Whoever, then, wishes to put aside the fear of illusion, which is the besetting timidity of men of prayer, and to advance in the way of perfection, and surely and perfectly to find Jesus Christ, let him embrace with great-heartedness,—*corde magno et animo volenti*,—this devotion to our Blessed Lady, which perhaps he has not known before; let him enter into this excellent way, which was unknown to him, and which I now point out: *Excellentiorem viam vobis demonstro*.

It is a path trodden by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, our sole Head. One of His members in passing by the same road cannot deceive himself. It is an *easy* road, because of the fulness of the grace and unction of the Holy

Ghost, which fills it to overflowing. No one wearies there; no one walking there has ever to retrace his steps. It is a *short* road, which leads us to Jesus in a little time. It is a *perfect* road, where there is no mud, no dust, nor the least spot of sin. Lastly, it is a *secure* road, which conducts us to Jesus Christ and life eternal in a straight and secure manner, without turning to the right hand or to the left. Let us, then, set forth upon that road, and walk there day and night, until we come to the fulness of the age of Jesus Christ.

SIXTH MOTIVE

169. This practice of devotion gives to those who make use of it faithfully a great interior liberty, which is the liberty of the children of God. For, as by this devotion we make ourselves slaves of Jesus Christ, and consecrate ourselves entirely to Him in this capacity, our Good Master, in recompense for the loving captivity in which we put ourselves, (1) takes all scruple and servile fear from the soul, with every thing that is capable of contracting, imprisoning, or confusing it; (2) He enlarges the heart by a firm confidence in God, making it look at Him as a Father; and (3) He inspires us with a tender and filial love.

170. Without stopping to prove these truths by arguments, I shall be content to quote here what I have read in the life of Mother Agnes of Jesus, a Dominicaness of the convent of Langeac, in Auvergne; who died there, in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1634. When she was only seven years old, and was suffering from great spiritual pains, she heard a voice which told her that if she wished to be delivered from all her pains, and to be protected against all her enemies, she was as quickly as possible to make herself the slave of Jesus and His most holy Mother. She had no sooner returned to the house than she gave herself up entirely to Jesus and His Mother in this capacity, although up to that time she had not known so much as what the devotion meant. Having found an iron chain, she put it round her body, and wore it to her death. After this action, all her pains and scruples ceased, and she found herself in a great peace and dilatation of heart. It was this which engaged her to teach the devotion to many persons, who made great progress in it, and, among others, to M. Olier, the founder of St. Sulpice, and to many priests and ecclesiastics of the same seminary. One day our

Lady appeared to her, and put round her neck a chain of gold, to testify the joy she had in Mother Agnes having made herself her Son's slave and her own; and St. Cecilia, who accompanied our Lady in that apparition, said to the religious: "Happy are the faithful slaves of the Queen of Heaven; for they shall enjoy true liberty,"—*Tibi servire libertas*.

SEVENTH MOTIVE

171. Another consideration which may engage us to embrace this practice is that of the great good which our neighbour will receive from it. For by this practice we exercise charity towards him in an eminent manner, seeing that we give him by Mary's hands all that is most precious to ourselves,—which is the satisfactory and impetratory value of all our good works, without excepting the least good thought, or the least little suffering. We agree that all the satisfactions we may have acquired, or may acquire up to the moment of our death, should be employed at our Lady's will, either for the conversion of sinners, or for the deliverance of souls from Purgatory.

Is not this to love our neighbour perfectly? Is not this to be the true disciple of Jesus Christ, who is always to be recognised by his charity? Is not this the way to convert sinners without any fear of vanity; and to deliver souls from Purgatory, without scarcely doing any thing but what we are obliged to do by our state of life?

172. To understand the excellence of this motive, we must understand also what a good it is to convert a sinner, or to deliver a soul from Purgatory. It is an infinite good, which is greater than to create heaven and earth, because we give to a soul the possession of God. If by this practice we deliver but one soul in our life from Purgatory, or convert but one sinner, would not that be enough to induce a truly charitable man to embrace it? But we must remark that, inasmuch as our good works pass through the hands of Mary, they receive an augmentation of purity, and consequently of merit, and of satisfactory and impetratory value. On this account they become more capable of solacing the souls in Purgatory and of converting sinners than if they did not pass by the virginal and liberal hands of Mary. It may be little that we give by our Lady; but, in truth, if it is given without our own will,

and with a disinterested charity, that little becomes very mighty to turn the wrath of God, and to attract His mercy. It would be no wonder if, at the hour of death, it should be found that a person faithful to this practice shall, by the means of it, have delivered many souls from Purgatory, and converted many sinners, though he shall have done nothing more than the ordinary actions of his state of life. What joy at his judgment! What glory in his eternity!

EIGHTH MOTIVE

173. Lastly, that which in some sense most persuasively engages us to this devotion to our Lady is, that it is an admirable means of persevering and being faithful in virtue. Whence comes it that the majority of the conversions of sinners are not durable? Whence comes it that we relapse so easily into sin? Whence comes it that the greater part of the just, instead of advancing from virtue to virtue and acquiring new graces, often lose the little virtue and the little grace they have? This misfortune comes, as I have shown before, from the fact that man is at once so corrupt, so feeble, and so inconstant, and yet trusts to himself, leans on his own strength, and believes himself capable of guarding the treasure of his graces, of his virtues and merits. On the other hand, by this devotion we confide all we possess to the Blessed Virgin, who is faithful; we take her for the universal depositary of all our goods of nature and of grace. It is to her fidelity that we trust them. It is on her power that we lean. It is on her mercy and charity that we build, in order that she may preserve and augment our virtues and merits, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, who put forth all their efforts to take them from us. We say to her, as a good child to his mother, and a faithful servant to her mistress, *Depositum custodi*,—"My good Mother and Mistress, I acknowledge that up to this time I have, by your intercession, received more grace from God than I deserve; and my sad experience teaches me that I carry this treasure in a very frail vessel, and that I am too weak and too miserable to keep it safely of myself. I beseech you, therefore, receive in trust all which I possess, and keep it for me by your fidelity and power. If you keep it for me, I shall lose nothing; if you hold me up, I shall not fall; if you protect me, I shall be sheltered from my enemies."

174. Listen to what St. Bernard said in former times, in order to encourage us to adopt this practice: “When Mary holds you up, you will not fall; when she protects you, you need not fear; when she leads you, you will not tire yourself; when she is favourable to you, you will arrive at the harbour of safety,”—*Ipsa tenente, non corrui; ipsa propitia, pervenis*. St. Bonaventure seems to say the same thing in still more formal terms. “The Blessed Virgin,” he says, “is not only retained in the plenitude of the Saints, but she also retains and keeps the Saints in their plenitude, so that it may not diminish. She hinders their virtues from being dissipated, their merits from withering, their graces from being lost, the devils from hurting them, and even our Lord from punishing them when they sin.” *Virgo non solum in plenitudine sanctorum detinetur, sed etiam in plenitudine sanctos detinet, ne plenitudo minuatur; detinet virtutes, ne fugiant; detinet merita, ne pereant; detinet gratias, ne effluent; detinet dæmones, ne noceant; detinet Filium, ne peccatores percutiat* (St. Bonav. *In Specul. B. V.*).

175. Our Blessed Lady is the faithful Virgin, who by her fidelity to God repairs the losses which the faithless Eve has caused by her infidelity. It is she who obtains the graces of fidelity and perseverance for those who attach themselves to her. It is on this account that a Saint compares her to a firm anchor, which holds them fast, and hinders their making shipwreck in the agitated sea of this world, where so many persons perish simply through not being fastened to that anchor. “We fasten our souls,” says he, “to thy hope, as to an abiding anchor,”—*Animas ad spem tuam sicut ad firmam ancoram alligamus*. It is to her that the Saints who have saved themselves have been the most attached, and have done their best to attach others, in order to persevere in virtue. Happy then, a thousand times happy, are the Christians who are now fastened faithfully and entirely to her, as to a firm anchor! The violence of the storms of this world will not make them founder, nor sink their heavenly treasures. Happy those who enter into Mary, as into the ark of Noe! The waters of the deluge of sin, which drowns so great a portion of the world, shall do no harm to them. *Qui operantur in me non peccabunt*, —“They who work in me shall not sin,” says Mary, with the Divine Wisdom. Blessed are the faithless children of the unhappy Eve, if only they attach themselves to the faithful Mother and Virgin, who remains always faithful, and never belies herself,—*Fidelis permanet, seipsam negare non*

potest! She always loves those who love her,—*Ego diligentes me diligo*,—not only with an affective love, but with an effectual and efficacious one, by hindering them, through a great abundance of graces, from drawing back in the pursuit of virtue, from falling in the road, and from losing the grace of her Son.

176. This good Mother, always out of pure charity, receives whatever we deposit with her; and what she has once received in her office of depositary, she is obliged by justice, in virtue of the contract of trusteeship, to keep safely for us: just as a person, with whom I have left a thousand pounds in trust, would be under the obligation of keeping them safely for me; so that if, by his negligence, they were lost, he would in justice be responsible to me for them. But the faithful Mary cannot let any thing which has been intrusted to her be lost through her negligence. Heaven and earth could pass away sooner than she could be negligent or faithless to those who trust in her.

177. Poor children of Mary, your weakness is extreme, your inconstancy is great, your inward nature is thoroughly corrupted, you are drawn (I grant it) from the same corrupt mass as all the children of Adam and Eve. Yet do not be discouraged on that account. Console yourselves, and exult in having the secret which I teach you,—a secret unknown to almost all Christians, even the most devout. Leave not your gold and silver in your coffers, which have been already broken open by the evil spirits, who have robbed you. Those coffers are too little, too weak, too old, to hold a treasure so precious and so great. Put not the pure and clear water of the fountain into your vessels, all spoilt and infected by sin. If the sin is there no longer, at least the odour of it is, and so the water will be spoilt. Put not your exquisite wines into your old casks, which have had bad wine in them; else even these wines will be spoilt, and perhaps break the casks, and be spilled upon the ground.

178. Though you, predestinate souls, understand me well enough, I will speak yet more openly. Trust not the gold of your charity, the silver of your purity, the waters of your heavenly graces, nor the wines of your merits and virtues, to a torn sack, an old and broken coffer, a spoilt and corrupted vessel, like yourselves; else you will be stripped by the robbers,—that is to

say, the demons,—who are seeking and watching night and day for the right time to do it; and you will infect, by your own bad odour of self-love, self-confidence, and self-will, every most pure thing which God has given you. Pour, pour into the bosom and the heart of Mary all your treasures, all your graces, all your virtues. She is a spiritual vessel, she is a vessel of honour, she is a marvellous vessel of devotion,—*Vas spirituale, vas honorabile, vas insigne devotionis*.

Since God Himself has been shut up in person, with all His perfections, in that vessel, it has become altogether spiritual, and the spiritual abode of the most spiritual souls. It has become honourable, and the throne of honour for the grandest princes of eternity. It has become wonderful in devotion, and a dwelling the most illustrious for sweetnesses, for graces, and for virtues. It has become rich as a house of gold, strong as a tower of David, and pure as a tower of ivory.

179. Oh! how happy is the man who has given every thing to Mary, and has trusted himself to Mary in every thing and for every thing! He belongs all to Mary, and Mary belongs all to him. He can say boldly with David, *Hæc facta est mihi*,—"Mary is made for me;" or with the beloved disciple, *Accepi eam in mea*,—"I have taken her for all my goods;" or with Jesus Christ, *Omnia mea tua sunt, et omnia tua mea sunt*,—"All that I have is thine, and all that thou hast is mine."

180. If any critic who reads this shall take it into his head that I speak here exaggeratedly, and with an extravagance of devotion, alas! he does not understand me, either because he is a carnal man, who has no relish for spiritual things; or because he is a worldling, who cannot receive the Holy Ghost; or because he is proud and critical, condemning and despising whatever he does not understand himself. But the souls which are not born of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God and Mary, understand me and relish me; and it is for these that I write.

181. Nevertheless, I say now both for the one and for the other, in returning from this digression, that the divine Mary, being the most gracious and liberal of all pure creatures, never lets herself be overcome in love and

liberality. As a holy man said of her, For an egg, she gives an ox; that is to say, for a little that is given to her, she gives much of what she has received from God. Hence, if a soul gives itself to her without reserve, she gives herself to that soul without reserve, if only we put our confidence in her without presumption, and labour on our side to acquire virtues, and to bridle our passions.

182. Let, then, the faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin say hardily with St. John Damascene, “Having confidence in you, O Mother of God, I shall be saved; being under your protection, I shall fear nothing; with your succour, I shall give battle to my enemies, and put them to flight; for devotion to you is an arm of salvation, which God gives to those whom it is His will to save.” *Spem tuam habens, O Deipara, servabor; defensionem tuam possidens, non timebo; persequar inimicos meos et in fugam vertam, habens protevtionem et auxilium tuum; nam tibi devotum esse est arma quædam salutis quæ Deus his dat quos vult salvos fieri* (Joan. Damasc.).



FIGURE OF THIS CONSECRATION IN THE HISTORY OF JACOB RECEIVING THE BLESSING OF ISAAC THROUGH THE OFFICES OF REBECCA

183. Of all the truths which I have been putting forward with regard to our Blessed Lady and her children and servants, the Holy Ghost gives us an admirable figure in the Scriptures. It is in the history of Jacob, who received the benediction of his father Isaac, by the skill and pains of Rebecca, his mother. This is the history, as the Holy Ghost relates it. I will afterwards add the explanation of it.

184. Esau having sold Jacob his birthright, Rebecca, the mother of the two brothers, who loved Jacob tenderly, secured this advantage to him many years afterwards by an address most holy but most full of mystery. Isaac, feeling himself very old, and wishing to bless his children before he died, called his son Esau, who was his favourite, and commanded him to go out hunting, to get him something to eat, in order that he might bless him afterwards. Rebecca promptly informed Jacob of what had passed, and ordered him to go and take two kids from the flock. When he had given them to his mother, she prepared for Isaac what she knew he liked. She clothed Jacob in the garments of Esau, which she kept, and covered his hands and his neck with the skin of the kids, so that his father, who was blind, might, in hearing Jacob's voice, think at least by the skin of his hands that it was Esau his brother. Isaac, having been surprised by the voice, which he thought was Jacob's voice, made him come near him. Having touched the skins with which his hands were covered, he said that the voice truly was the voice of Jacob, but that the hands were the hands of Esau. After he had eaten, and, in kissing Jacob, had smelt the odour of his perfumed garments, he blessed him, and wished for him the dew of heaven

and the fruitfulness of earth. He made him lord over all his brethren, and finished his blessing with these words, “Cursed be he that curseth thee, and let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings.” Isaac had hardly finished these words when Esau entered, and brought with him what he had captured while out hunting, in order that his father might eat it, and then bless him. The holy patriarch was surprised with an incredible astonishment when he understood what had happened. But, far from retracting what he had done, on the contrary he confirmed it, for he saw too plainly that the finger of God was in the matter. Esau then uttered great cries, as the holy Scripture remarks, and loudly accusing the deceitfulness of his brother, he asked his father if he had but one benediction; being in this point, as the holy Fathers remark, the image of those who are too glad to ally God with the world, and are fain to enjoy the consolations of heaven and the consolations of earth both together. At last Isaac, touched with the cries of Esau, blessed him, but with a blessing of the earth, subjecting him to his brother. This made him conceive such an envenomed hatred to Jacob, that he waited only for his father’s death, in order to kill him. Neither would Jacob have escaped death, if his dear mother Rebecca had not saved him from it by her industries, and by the good counsels which she gave him, and which he followed.

185. Before explaining this beautiful history, we must observe that, according to the holy Fathers and the interpreters of Scripture, Jacob is the figure of Jesus Christ and the predestinate, and Esau that of the reprobate. We have but got to examine the actions and conduct of the one and the other to form our judgment about this.

(1) Esau, the elder, was strong and robust of body, adroit and skilful in drawing the bow, and in taking much game in the chase. (2) He hardly ever stayed in the house; and putting no confidence in any thing but his own strength and address, he only worked out of doors. (3) He took very little pains to please his mother Rebecca, and indeed did nothing for that end. (4) He was such a glutton, and loved eating so much, that he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. (5) He was, like Cain, full of envy against his brother Jacob, and persecuted him beyond measure.

186. Now this is the daily conduct of the reprobate.

§ 1. They trust in their own strength and aptitude for temporal affairs. They are very strong, very able, and very enlightened in earthly business; but very weak and very ignorant in heavenly things,—*In terrenis fortes, in cælestibus debiles.*

187. § 2. It is on this account that they are hardly at all, or at least very little, at their own homes,—that is to say, in their own interior, which is the inward and essential house which God has given to every man, to live there after His example; for God always rests in Himself. The reprobate do not love retirement, nor spirituality, nor inward devotion; and they treat as little, or as bigots, or as savages, those who are interior or retired from the world, and who work more within than without.

188. § 3. The reprobate care next to nothing for devotion to our Blessed Lady, the Mother of the predestinate. It is true that they do not hate her formally. Indeed, they sometimes praise her, and say they love her, and even practise some devotion in her honour. Nevertheless they cannot bear that we should love her tenderly, because they have not the tendernesses of Jacob for her. They find much to say against the practices of devotion, in which her good children and servants faithfully employ themselves in order to gain her affection, because they do not think that devotion necessary to salvation; and they consider, that provided they do not hate our Lady formally, or openly despise her devotion, it is enough. Moreover, they imagine that they are already in her good graces, and that, in fine, they are her servants, inasmuch as they recite and mumble certain prayers in her honour, without tenderness for her, or amendment in themselves.

189. § 4. The reprobate sell their birthright; that is to say, the pleasures of paradise. They sell it for a pottage of lentils; that is to say, for the pleasures of the earth. They laugh, they drink, they eat, they amuse themselves, they gamble, they dance, and take no more pains than Esau did to render themselves worthy of the benediction of their Heavenly Father. In a word, they think only of earth, and they love earth only; and they speak and act only for earth and for its pleasures, selling for one moment of enjoyment, for one vain puff of honour, and for a morsel of hard metal, yellow or white,

their baptismal grace, their robe of innocence, and their heavenly inheritance.

190. § 5. Finally, the reprobate daily hate and persecute the predestinate openly and secretly. They feel the predestinate as a burden to them, they despise them, they criticise them, they counterwork them, they abuse them, they rob them, they cheat them, they impoverish them, they drive them away, they bring them low into the dust; while they themselves are making fortunes, are taking their pleasures, getting themselves into good positions, enriching themselves, aggrandising themselves, and living at their ease.

191. As to Jacob, the younger:

§ 1. He was of a feeble constitution, meek and peaceful. He lived for the most part at home, in order to gain the good graces of his mother Rebecca, whom he loved tenderly. If he went abroad, it was not of his own will, nor through any confidence in his own industry, but to obey his mother.

192. § 2. He loved and honoured his mother. It was on this account that he kept at home. He avoided every thing which could displease her, and did every thing which he thought would please her; and this increased the love which Rebecca already had for him.

193. § 3. He was subject in all things to his dear mother. He obeyed her entirely in all matters,—promptly, without delaying, and lovingly, without complaining. At the least token of her will, the little Jacob ran and worked; and he believed every thing she said to him. For example: when she told him to fetch two kids, and that he should fetch them in order that she should prepare something for his father Isaac to eat, Jacob did not reply that one was enough to make a dish for a single man, but without reasoning he did what she told him to do.

194. § 4. He had a great confidence in his dear mother. As he did not lean in the least on his own ability, he leant exclusively on the care and protection of his mother. He appealed to her in all his necessities, and consulted her in all his doubts. For example: when he asked if instead of a blessing, he

should not receive a curse from his father, he believed her and trusted her, when she said that she would take the curse upon herself.

195. § 5. Lastly, he imitated as far as he could the virtues he saw in his mother. It seems as if one of his reasons for leading such a sedentary life at home was to imitate his dear mother, who was virtuous, and kept herself removed from bad companies, which corrupt the morals. By this means he made himself worthy to receive the double benediction of his beloved father.

196. Such also is the conduct which the predestinate daily observe.

§ 1. They are sedentary, and home-keepers, with their Mother. In other words, they love retirement, and are interior. They give themselves to prayer; but it is after the example and in the company of their Mother the holy Virgin, the whole of whose glory is within, and who, during her whole life, so much loved retirement and prayer. It is true that they sometimes appear without, in the world; but it is in obedience to the will of God, and that of their dear Mother, to fulfil the duties of their state. However apparently important their outward works may be, they esteem still more highly those which they do within themselves, in their interior, in the company of the Blessed Virgin. For it is within that they accomplish the great work of their perfection, compared with which all their other works are but infant sports. It is on this account that, while sometimes their brothers and sisters are working outwardly with much energy, success, and skill, in the praise and with the approbation of the world, they, on the contrary, know by the light of the Holy Ghost that there is far more glory, more good, and more pleasure, in remaining hidden in retreat with Jesus Christ their Model, in an entire and perfect subjection to their Mother, than to do of themselves wonders of nature and grace in the world, as so many Esaus and reprobates do. *Gloria et divitiæ in domo ejus*,—"Glory for God and riches for men are to be found in the house of Mary."

Lord Jesus, how sweet are Thy tabernacles! The sparrow has found a house to lodge in, and the turtle-dove a nest for her little ones. Oh, happy is the man who dwells in the house of Mary, where Thou wert the first to make

Thy dwelling! It is in this house of the predestinate that he receives succour from Thee alone, and that he has disposed the steps and ascents of all the virtues, to raise himself in his heart to perfection in this vale of tears. *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua!*

197. § 2. The predestinate tenderly love and truly honour our Blessed Lady as their good Mother and Mistress. They love her not only by mouth, but in truth. They honour her not only outwardly, but in the bottom of their hearts. They avoid, like Jacob, every thing which can displease her; and they practise with fervour whatever they think will make them find favour with her. They bring to her, and give her, not two kids, as Jacob did to Rebecca, but their body and their soul, with all that depends on them, figured by the two kids of Jacob. They bring them to her, (1) that she may receive them as things which belong to her; (2) that she may kill them, and make them die to sin and self, in stripping them of their own skin, and their own self-love, and by this means to please Jesus her Son, who wills not to have any for His disciples and friends but those who are dead to themselves; (3) that she may prepare them for the taste of our Heavenly Father, and for His greatest glory, which she knows better than any other creature; and (4) that by her cares and intercessions this body and soul, thoroughly purified from every stain, thoroughly dead, thoroughly stripped, and well prepared, may be a delicate meat, worthy of the mouth and the blessing of our Heavenly Father. Is not this what the predestinate do, who relish and practise the perfect consecration to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary, which we are now teaching them, by way of testifying to Jesus and Mary an effective and courageous love?

The reprobate tell us loudly enough that they love Jesus, and that they love and honour Mary; but it is not with their substance, it is not up to the point of sacrificing to them their body with its senses, their soul with its passions, as the predestinate do. These last are subject and obedient to our Blessed Lady, as to their good Mother; after the example of Jesus Christ, who, of the three-and-thirty years He lived on earth, employed thirty to glorify God His Father, by a perfect and entire subjection to His holy Mother.

198. § 3. The predestinate obey Mary in following exactly her counsels, as the little Jacob did those of Rebecca, who said to him, *Acquiesce consiliis meis*,—"My son, follow my counsels;" or like the people at the marriage of Cana, to whom our Lady said, *Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite*,—"Whatever my Son shall say to you, that do." Jacob, for having obeyed his mother, received the blessing, as it were, miraculously, although naturally he would not have had it. The people at the marriage of Cana, for having followed our Lady's counsel, were honoured with our Lord's first miracle, who there changed the water into wine at the prayer of His holy Mother. In like manner, all those who, to the end of time, shall receive the benediction of our Heavenly Father, and shall be honoured by the wonders of God, shall only receive their graces in consequence of their perfect obedience to Mary. The Esaus, on the contrary, lose their blessing through their want of subjection to the Blessed Virgin.

199. § 4. The predestinate have also a great confidence in the goodness and power of our Blessed Lady, their good Mother. They call incessantly for her help. They look upon her as their polar star, to lead them to a good port. They lay bare to her their pains and their necessities with much openness of heart. They attach themselves to her mercy and her sweetness, in order to get the pardon of their sins by her intercession, or to taste her maternal sweetnesses in their pains and wearinesses.

They even throw themselves, hide themselves, and lose themselves in an admirable manner in her loving and virginal bosom, that they may be set on fire there of pure love, that they may be cleansed there from their least stain, and fully to find Jesus, who dwells there, as on His most glorious throne. O what happiness! "Think not," says the Abbot Gueric, "that it is happier to dwell in Abraham's bosom than in Mary's; for it is in this last that our Lord has placed His throne,"—*Ne credideris majoris esse felicitatis habitare in sinu Abrahamæ quam in sinu Mariæ, cum in eo Dominus posuerit thronum suum*.

The reprobate, on the contrary, putting all their trust in themselves, only eat with the prodigal what the swine eat. They eat earth like the toads, and, like the children of the world, they love only visible and external things. They

have no relish for the sweetnesses of Mary's bosom. They have not that feeling of a certain resting-place, and a sure confidence, which the predestinate feel in the holy Virgin, their good Mother. They are miserably attached to their outward hunger, as St. Gregory says, and make not so much as a pretence of having any taste for the sweetness which is prepared within themselves, and within Jesus and Mary.

200. § 5. Lastly, the predestinate keep the ways of our Blessed Lady, their good Mother; that is to say, they imitate her. It is in this point that they are truly happy and truly devout, and carry more especially the mark of their predestination. This good Mother says to them, *Beati qui custodiunt vias meas*; that is to say, "Blessed are they who practise my virtues, and with the help of divine grace walk in the footsteps of my life. During life they are happy in this world, through the abundance of graces and sweetnesses which I impart to them from my fulness, and more abundantly than to others, who do not imitate me so closely. They are happy in their death, which is mild and tranquil, and at which I am ordinarily present myself, that I myself may conduct them to the joys of eternity; and, lastly, they shall be happy in eternity; for never has any one of my good servants been lost, who imitated my virtues during life."

The reprobate, on the contrary, are unhappy during their life, at their death, and for eternity, because they do not imitate our Lady in her virtues, but content themselves with sometimes being enrolled in her confraternities, reciting some prayers in her honour, or going through some other exterior devotion. O holy Virgin, my good Mother, how happy are those (I repeat it with the transports of my heart),—how happy are those who, not letting themselves be seduced by a false devotion towards you, faithfully keep your ways, your counsels, and your orders! But how unhappy and accursed are those who abuse your devotion, and keep not the commandments of your Son,—*Maledicti omnes qui declinant a mandatis tuis!*

201. Let us now turn to look at the charitable duties which our Blessed Lady, as the best of all Mothers, fulfils for the faithful servants who have given themselves to her after the manner I have described, and according to the figure of Jacob.

I. She loves them: *Ego diligentes me diligo*,—"I love those who love me." She loves them (1) because she is their true Mother; and a mother loves her child, the fruit of her entrails; (2) she loves them out of gratitude, because they effectively love her as their good Mother; (3) she loves them because, being predestinate, God loves them,—*Jacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui*; (4) she loves them because they are all consecrated to her, and are her possession and her inheritance,—*In Israel hæreditare*.

202. She loves them tenderly, and more tenderly than all other mothers put together. Throw, if you can, all the natural love which all the mothers of the world have for their children, into the one heart of one mother for one only child. Surely that mother will love that child immensely. Nevertheless it is true that Mary loves her children yet more tenderly than that mother would love that child of hers.

She does not love them only with affection, but with efficacy. Her love for them is active and effective, equal to that of Rebecca for Jacob, and far beyond it.

See what this good Mother, of whom Rebecca was but the type, does to obtain for her children the blessing of our Heavenly Father.

203. § 1. She is on the look-out, as Rebecca was, for favourable occasions to do them good, to aggrandise and enrich them. She sees clearly in God all goods and evils, all prosperous and adverse fortunes, the blessings and the cursings of God; and then she so disposes things from afar, that she may exempt her servants from all sorts of evils, and heap upon them all sorts of goods; so that if there is a good fortune to make in God by the fidelity of a creature to any high employment, it is certain that Mary will procure that good fortune for some of her true children and servants, and will give them the grace to go through it with fidelity. It is a Saint who says, *Ipsa procurat negotia nostra*.

204. § 2. She also gives her clients good counsels, as Rebecca did to Jacob, *Fili mi, acquiesce consiliis meis*,—"My son, follow my counsels." Among other counsels, she inspires them to bring her the two kids; that is to say,

their body and soul, in order to consecrate them, to make a pottage agreeable to God, and to do every thing which Jesus Christ her Son has taught by His words and His examples. If it is not by herself that she gives these counsels, it is by the ministry of the Angels, who have no greater honour or pleasure than to descend to earth to obey any of her commandments, and to succour any of her servants.

205. § 3. When they have brought to her and consecrated to her their body and soul, and all that depends on them, without excepting any thing, what does that good Mother do? Just what Rebecca did of old with the two kids Jacob brought her. (1) She kills them, and makes them die to the old Adam. (2) She flays, and strips them of their natural skin, their natural inclinations, self-love, their own will, and all attachment to creatures. (3) She cleanses them of their spots, their vilenesses, and their sins. (4) She dresses them to the taste of God, and to His greatest glory; and as it is Mary alone who knows perfectly what that divine taste is, and what that greatest glory of the Most High, it is Mary alone who, without making any mistake, can accommodate and dress our body and soul for that taste infinitely exalted, and for that glory infinitely hidden.

206. § 4. This good Mother, having received the perfect offering which we make to her of ourselves, our own merits and satisfactions, by the devotion I am describing, strips us of our old garments; she makes us her own, and so makes us worthy to appear before our heavenly Father.

(1) She clothes us in the clean, new, precious, and perfumed garments of Esau the elder,—that is, of Jesus Christ her Son,—whom she keeps in her house,—that is to say, whom she has in her own power. She is the treasurer and eternal dispenser of the merits and virtues of her Son, which she gives and communicates to whom she wills, when she wills, as she wills, and in such quantity as she wills; as we have seen before.

(2) She covers the neck and hands of her servants with the skins of the kids she killed; that is to say, she adorns them with the merits and value of her own proper actions. She kills and mortifies, it is true, all that is impure and imperfect in them, but she neither loses nor dissipates one atom of the good

which grace has done there. On the contrary, she preserves and augments it, to make it the ornament and the strength of their neck and their hands; that is to say, to fortify them, and to help them to carry the yoke of the Lord, which is worn upon the neck, and to work great things for the glory of God, and the salvation of their poor brethren.

(3) She bestows a new perfume and a new grace upon their garments and adornments, in communicating to them her own garments, merits, and virtues, which she bequeathed to them by her testament, when she died; as said a holy religious of the last century, who died in the odour of sanctity, and learnt this by revelation. Thus all her domestics, faithful servants and slaves, are doubly clad in the garments of her Son and in her own,—*Omnes domestici vestiti sunt duplicibus*. It is on this account that they have nothing to fear from the cold of Jesus Christ, who is white as snow,—a cold which the reprobate, all naked, and stripped of the merits of Jesus and Mary, cannot for one moment bear.

207. (4) Finally, she enables them to obtain the blessing of our Heavenly Father, though, being but the youngest born and indeed only adopted children, they have no natural right to have it. With these garments all new, most precious, and of most fragrant odour, and with their body and soul well prepared and dressed, they draw near with confidence to the Father's bed of repose. He understands and distinguishes their voice, which is the voice of the sinner; He touches their hands, covered with skins; He smells the good odour of their clothes; He eats with joy of that which Mary their Mother has dressed for Him, recognising in them the merits and the good odour of His Son and of His holy Mother. (1) First, then, He gives them His double benediction, the benediction of the dew of Heaven, *De rore cælesti*,—that is to say, of divine grace, which is the seed of glory; *Benedixit nos in omni benedictione spiritali in Christo Jesu*; and then the benediction of the fat of the earth, *De pinguedine terræ*,—that is to say, the good Father gives them their daily bread, and a sufficient abundance of the goods of this world. (2) Secondly, He makes them masters of their other brethren, the reprobate. But this primacy is not always apparent in the world, which passes in an instant, and where the reprobate are often masters,—*Peccatores effabuntur et gloriabuntur; vidi impium superexaltatum et*

elevatum. But it is nevertheless a true primacy; and it will appear manifestly in the other world for all eternity, where the just, as the Holy Ghost says, shall reign over the nations, and command them,—*Dominabuntur populis*. (3) Thirdly, His Majesty, not content with blessing them in their persons and their goods, blesses also those who shall bless them, and curses those who shall curse and persecute them.

208. II. The second duty which our Blessed Lady fulfils towards her faithful servants is, that she furnishes them with every thing, both for their body and their soul. She gives them double clothing, as we have just seen. She gives them to eat the most exquisite meats of the table of God; for she gives them to eat the bread of life, which she herself has formed. *A generationibus meis implemini*,—My dear children, she says, under the name of divine Wisdom, be filled with my generations; that is to say, with Jesus, the fruit of life, whom I have brought into the world for you. *Venite, comedite panem meum et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis; comedite, et bibite, et inebriamini, carissimi*,—Come, she repeats to them in another place, eat my bread, which is Jesus, and drink the wine of His love, which I have mixed for you. As it is Mary who is the treasurer and dispenser of the gifts and graces of the Most High, she gives a good portion, and indeed the best portion, to nourish and maintain her children and her servants. They are fattened on the Living Bread. They are inebriated on the wine which brings forth virgins. They are borne at the bosom of Mary,—*Ad ubera portabimini*. They have such facility in carrying the yoke of Jesus Christ, that they feel nothing of its weight, because of the oil of devotion which has made it soften and decay,—*Jugum eorum putrescere faciet a facie olei*.

209. III. The third good which our Lady does to her servants is, that she conducts and directs them according to the will of her Son. Rebecca guided her little Jacob, and gave him good advice from time to time; either to draw upon himself the blessing of his father, or to avert from himself the hatred and persecution of his brother Esau. Mary, who is the Star of the Sea, leads all her faithful servants to a good port. She shows them the paths of eternal life. She makes them avoid the dangerous places. She conducts them by her hand along the paths of justice. She steadies them when they are about to fall; she lifts them up when they have fallen. She reproves them like a

charitable mother when they fail; and sometimes she even lovingly chastises them. Can a child obedient to Mary, his foster-mother and his enlightened guide, go astray in the paths of eternity? *Ipsam sequens non devias*,—"If you follow her," says St. Bernard, "you cannot wander from the road." Fear not, therefore, that a true child of Mary can be deceived by the evil one, or fall into any formal heresy. There where the guidance of Mary is, neither the evil spirit with his illusions, nor the heretics with their subtleties, can ever come,—*Ipsâ tenente, non corrui*s.

210. IV. The fourth good office which our Lady renders to her children and faithful servants is, to protect and defend them. Rebecca, by her cares and artifices, delivered Jacob from all the dangers in which he found himself, and particularly from the death which his brother Esau would have inflicted on him, because of the envy and hatred which he bore him; as Cain did of old to his brother Abel. Mary, the good Mother of the predestinate, hides them under the wings of her protection, as a hen hides her chickens. She speaks, she humbles herself, she condescends to all their weaknesses, to secure them from the hawk and the vulture. She puts herself round about them, and she accompanies them, like an army in battle array, *ut castrorum acies ordinata*. Shall a man, who has an army of a hundred thousand soldiers around him, fear his enemies? A faithful servant of Mary, surrounded by her protection and her imperial power, has still less to fear. This good Mother and powerful princess of the heavens would rather despatch battalions of millions of angels to succour one of her servants than that it should ever be said that a faithful servant of Mary, who trusted in her, had to succumb to the malice, the number, and the vehemence of his enemies.

211. V. Lastly, the fifth and the greatest good which the sweet Mary procures for her faithful clients is, to intercede for them with her Son, and to appease Him by her prayers. She unites them to Him with a most intimate union, and she keeps them unshaken in that union.

Rebecca made Jacob come near to his father's bed. The good man touched him, embraced him, and even kissed him with joy, being content and satisfied with the well-dressed viands which he had brought him; and

having smelt with much contentment the exquisite perfume of his garments, he cried out, *Ecce odor filii mei sicut odor agri pleni, cui benedixit Dominus*,—"Behold the odour of my son, which is like the odour of a full field that the Lord hath blest." This odour of the full field which charms the heart of the Father is nothing else than the odour of the virtues and merits of Mary, who is a field full of grace, where God the Father has sown His only Son, as a grain of the wheat of the elect. Oh, how a child, perfumed with the good odour of Mary, is welcome with Jesus Christ, who is the Father of the world to come! Oh, how promptly and how perfectly is such a child united to his Lord! But we have shown this at length already.

212. Furthermore, after Mary has heaped her favours upon her children and faithful servants, and has obtained for them the benediction of her Heavenly Father, and union with Jesus Christ, she preserves them in Jesus, and Jesus in them. She takes care of them, watches over them always, for fear they should lose the grace of God, and fall back into the snares of their enemies. *In plenitudine detinet*,—she detains the Saints in their fulness, and makes them persevere to the end, as we have seen.

This is the interpretation of [the history of Jacob and Esau] that great and ancient figure of predestination and reprobation, so unknown, and so full of mysteries.

III. THE WONDERFUL EFFECTS WHICH THIS DEVOTION PRODUCES IN THE SOUL WHICH IS FAITHFUL TO IT

213. My dear brother, be sure that, if you are faithful to the interior and exterior practices of this devotion, which I will point out, the following effects will take place in your soul:

§ 1. By the light which the Holy Ghost will give you by His dear Spouse, Mary, you will understand your own evil, your corruption, and your incapacity for any thing good, which is not God's free gift to us, either as Author of nature or of grace. In consequence of this knowledge, you will despise yourself. You will only think of yourself with horror. You will regard yourself as a snail, that spoils every thing with its slime; or a toad, that poisons every thing with its venom; or as a spiteful serpent, only seeking to deceive. In other words, the humble Mary will communicate to you a portion of her profound humility, which will make you despise yourself, despise nobody else, but love to be despised yourself.

214 . § 2. Our Blessed Lady will give you also a portion of her faith, which was the greatest of all faiths that ever were on earth, greater than the faith of all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints put together. Now that she is reigning in the heavens, she has no longer this faith, because she sees all things clearly in God by the light of glory. Nevertheless, with the consent of the Most High, in entering into glory she has not lost her faith. She has kept it, in order that she may keep it in the Church Militant for her faithful servants. The more, then, you gain the favour of that august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more will you go by pure faith in all your conduct; a pure faith which will make you hardly care at all about the sensible and the extraordinary; a lively faith animated by charity, which will enable you to

perform all your actions from the motive of pure love; a faith firm and immovable as a rock, through which you will rest quiet and constant in the midst of storms and hurricanes; a faith active and piercing, which, like a mysterious pass-key, will give you entrance into all the mysteries of Jesus, into the Last Ends of man, and into the Heart of God Himself; a courageous faith, which will enable you to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and for the salvation of souls; lastly, a faith which will be your blazing torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine wisdom, and your omnipotent arm, which you will use to enlighten those who are in the darkness of the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and who have need of the heated gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead in sin, to teach and overthrow, by your meek and powerful words, the hearts of marble and the cedars of Lebanon, and finally, to resist the devil and all the enemies of salvation.

215. § 3. This Mother of fair love will take away from your heart all scruple and all disorder of servile fear. She will open and enlarge it to run the way of her Son's commandments with the holy liberty of the children of God. She will introduce into it pure love, of which she has the treasure; so that you shall no longer be guided by fear, as hitherto, in your dealings with the God of charity, but by pure love. You will look on Him as your good Father, whom you will be incessantly trying to please, and with whom you will converse confidently, as a child with its tender father. If unfortunately you offend Him, you will at once humble yourself before Him. You will ask His pardon with great lowliness, but at the same time you will stretch your hand out to Him with simplicity; and you will raise yourself up lovingly, without trouble or disquietude, and go on your way to Him without discouragement.

216. § 4. Our Blessed Lady will fill you with a great confidence in God and in herself: (1) because you will not be approaching to Jesus by yourself, but always by that good Mother; (2) because, as you have given her all your merits, graces, and satisfactions, to dispose of at her will, she will communicate to you her virtues, and will clothe you in her merits, so that you will be able to say to God with confidence, "Behold Mary Thy handmaid; be it done unto me according to Thy word,"—*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*; (3) because, as you have given

yourself entirely to her, body and soul, she, who is liberal with the liberal, and more liberal even than the liberal, will in return give herself to you in a marvellous but real manner, so that you may say to her with assurance, *Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac*,—"I am thine, holy Virgin; save me:" or, as I have said before, with the Beloved Disciple, *Accepi te in mea*,—"I have taken thee, holy Mother, for all my goods." You may also say with St. Bonaventure, *Ecce, Domina, salvatrix mea, fiducialiter agam et non timebo, quia fortitudo mea, et laus mea in Domino es tu*; and in another place, *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt; O virgo gloriosa, super omnia benedicta, ponam te ut signaculum super cor meum, quia fortis est ut mors dilectio tua*. "My dear Mistress, who saves me, I will have confidence and will not fear, because you are my strength and my praise in the Lord. . . . I am altogether yours, and all that I have belongs to you; O glorious Virgin, blessed above all created things! I will put you as a seal upon my heart, because your love is as strong as death."

You may say to God, in the sentiments of the prophet, *Domine, non est exaltatum cor meum, neque elati sunt oculi mei; neque ambulavi in magnis, neque in mirabilibus super me, si non humiliter sentiebam; sed exaltavi animam meam: sicut ablactatus est super matre tua, ita retributio in anima mea*,—"Lord, my heart and my eyes have no right to extol themselves, or to be proud, or to seek great and wonderful things. Yet even in this I am not humble; but I have lifted up and encouraged my soul by confidence: I am like a child, weaned from the pleasures of earth, and resting on its mother's lap; and it is on that lap that all good things come to me" (see Psalm 130). (4) What will still further increase your confidence in her is, that you will have less confidence in yourself. You have given her, in trust, all you have of good about you, that she may have it and keep it; and so all the trust you once had in yourself has become an increase of confidence in her, who is your treasure. Oh, what confidence and what consolation is this for a soul, who can say that the treasure of God, where He has been pleased to put all He had most precious, is his own treasure also! *Ipsa est thesaurus Domini*. It was a Saint who said she was the treasure of the Lord.

217. § 5. The soul of our Blessed Lady will communicate itself to you, to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will enter into the place of yours, to rejoice in

God her salvation, provided only that you are faithful to the practices of this devotion. *Sit in singulis anima Mariæ, ut magnificet Dominum: sit in singulis spiritus Mariæ, ut exultet in Deo* (St. Ambrose),—"Let the soul of Mary be in each of us to glorify the Lord: let the spirit of Mary be in each of us to rejoice in God." Ah! when will the happy time come, said a holy man of our own days, who was all absorbed in Mary,—ah! when will the happy time come, when the divine Mary will be established mistress and queen of hearts, in order that she may subject them fully to the empire of her great and holy Jesus? When will souls breathe Mary, as the body breathes air? When that time comes, wonderful things will happen in those lowly places, where the Holy Ghost, finding His dear Spouse as it were reproduced in souls, shall come in with abundance, and fill them full to overflowing with His gifts, and particularly with the gift of wisdom, to work the miracles of grace. My dear brother, when will that happy time, that age of Mary, come, when souls, losing themselves in the abyss of her interior, shall become living copies of Mary, to love and glorify Jesus? That time will not come until men shall know and practise this devotion which I am teaching. *Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariæ.*

218 § 6. If Mary, who is the tree of life, is well cultivated in our soul by fidelity to the practices of this devotion, she will bear her fruit in her own time, and her fruit is none other than Jesus Christ. How many devout souls do I see who seek Jesus Christ, some by one way or by one practice, and others by other ways and other practices; and after they have toiled much throughout the night, they say, *Per totam noctem laborantes nihil cepimus*,—"We have toiled all night, and have taken nothing"! We may say to them, *Laborastis multum, et intulistis parum*,—"You have laboured much, and gained little:" Jesus Christ is yet feeble in you. But by that immaculate way of Mary, and that divine practice which I am teaching, we toil during the day; we toil in a holy place; we toil but little. There is no night in Mary, because there is no sin, nor even the slightest shade. Mary is a holy place, and the holy of holies where Saints are formed and moulded.

219. Take notice, if you please, that I say the Saints are moulded in Mary. There is a great difference between making a figure in relief by blows of hammer and chisel, and making a figure by throwing it into a mould.

Statuaries and sculptors labour much to make figures in the first manner; but to make them in the second manner, they work little, and do their work quickly.

St. Augustin calls our Blessed Lady *forma Dei*,—"the mould of God:" *Si formam Dei te appellem, digna existis*,—"The mould fit to cast and mould gods." He who is cast in this mould is presently formed and moulded in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in him. At a slight expense and in a short time he will become God, because he has been cast in the same mould which has formed a God.

220. It seems to me that I can very aptly compare directors and devout persons, who wish to form Jesus Christ in themselves or others by different practices from this, to sculptors who trust in their own professional skill, ingenuity, or art, and so give an infinity of hammerings and chisellings to a hard stone or a piece of badly polished wood, to make an image of Jesus Christ out of it. Sometimes they do not succeed in giving any thing like the natural expression of Jesus, either from having no knowledge or experience of the Person of Jesus, or from some blow awkwardly given, which has spoiled the work. But for those who embrace the secret of grace which I am revealing to them, I may reasonably compare them to founders and casters, who have discovered the beautiful mould of Mary, where Jesus was naturally and divinely formed; and without trusting to their own skill, but only in the goodness of the mould, they cast themselves and lose themselves in Mary, to become the portraits of Jesus Christ after nature.

221. Oh, beautiful and true comparison! but who will comprehend it? I desire that you may, my dear brother. But remember that we only cast in a mould what is melted and liquid; that is to say, you must destroy and melt down in yourself the old Adam to become the new one in Mary.

222. § 7. By this practice, faithfully observed, you will give Jesus more glory in a month than by any other practice, however difficult, in many years; and I give the following reasons for it.

(1) Because, doing your actions by our Blessed Lady, as this practice teaches you, you abandon your own intentions and operations, although good and known, to lose yourself, so to speak, in the intentions of the Blessed Virgin, although they are unknown. Thus you enter by participation into the sublimity of her intentions, which are so pure, that she gives more glory to God by the least of her actions—for example, in twirling her distaff or pointing her needle—than St. Lawrence by his cruel martyrdom on his gridiron, or even all the Saints by all their heroic actions put together. It was thus that, during her sojourn here below, she acquired such an unspeakable aggregate of graces and merits, that it were easier to count the stars of the firmament, the drops of water in the sea, or the grains of sand upon its shore, than her merits and graces. Thus it was that she gave more glory to God than all the Angels and Saints have given Him, or ever will give Him. O prodigy of a Mary! thou canst not help but do prodigies of grace in souls that wish to lose themselves altogether in thee!

223. (2) Because the soul in this practice counts as nothing whatever it thinks or does of itself; and only puts its trust, and takes its pleasure, in the dispositions of Mary, when it approaches Jesus, or even speaks to Him. Thus it practises humility far more than the souls who act of themselves, and lean, with however imperceptible a complacency, on their own dispositions. But if the soul acts more humbly, it therefore glorifies God more highly; and He is only perfectly glorified by the humble, and those that are little and lowly in heart.

224. (3) Because our Blessed Lady, wishing by her great charity to receive the present of our actions in her virginal hands, gives them an admirable beauty and splendour. Moreover, she offers them herself to Jesus Christ, and without difficulty; and our Lord is thus more glorified by them than if we offered them by our own criminal hands.

225. (4) Lastly, because you never think of Mary without Mary, in your place, thinking of God. You never praise or honour Mary without Mary praising and honouring God. Mary is altogether relative to God; and, indeed, I might well call her the relation to God. She only exists with reference to God. She is the echo of God, who says nothing, repeats

nothing, but God. If you say ‘Mary,’ she says ‘God.’ St. Elizabeth praised Mary, and called her blessed, because she had believed. Mary, the faithful echo of God, at once intoned *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*,—“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” That which Mary did then, she does daily now. When we praise her, love her, honour her, or give any thing to her, it is God who is praised, God who is loved, God who is glorified. We give then to God by Mary and in Mary.



IV. PARTICULAR PRACTICES OF THIS DEVOTION

1. EXTERNAL PRACTICES

226. Although what is essential in this devotion consists in the interior, we must not fail to unite to the inward practice certain external observances. *Hæc oportet facere, et illa non omittere.* We must do the one, yet not leave the other undone, both because the outward practices well performed aid the inward ones, and because they make a man remember, by reminding his senses, what he has done or ought to do; and also because they are suitable to edify our neighbour, who sees them, which inward practices cannot do. Let no worldling then or critic sneer at this. Let them not say that because true devotion is in the heart, we must avoid external devotion; or that devotion ought to be hidden, and that there may be vanity in showing it. I answer with my Master, that men should see our good works, that they may glorify our Father, who is in Heaven; not, as St. Gregory says, that we ought to perform our actions and exterior devotions to please men and to get praise,—that would be vanity,—but that we should sometimes do them before men, with the view of pleasing God, and glorifying Him thereby, without caring either for the contempt or the praise of men.

I will only allude briefly to some exterior practices, which I do not call ‘exterior’ because we do them without any interior, but because they have something outward about them, to distinguish them from those which are purely inward.

FIRST PRACTICE

227. Those who wish to enter into this particular devotion, which is not at present erected into a confraternity, though that were to be wished,—after having, as I said in the first part of this preparation for the reign of Jesus Christ, employed twelve days, at least, in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, which is contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ,—should employ

three weeks in filling themselves with Jesus Christ by the holy Virgin. They should pursue the following order:

228. During the first week they should employ all their prayers and pious actions in asking for a knowledge of themselves, and for contrition of their sins; and they should do this in a spirit of humility. For that end they can, if they choose, meditate on what I have said before of our inward corruption. They can look upon themselves during the six days of this week as snails, crawling things, toads, swine, serpents, and unclean animals; or they can reflect on those three considerations of St. Bernard, the vileness of our origin, the dishonours of our present state, and our ending as the food of worms. They should pray our Lord and the Holy Ghost to enlighten them; and for that end they might use the ejaculations, *Domine, ut videam*, or *Noverim me*, or *Veni Sancte Spiritus*; and they may say daily the *Ave maris stella*, and the litany of the Holy Ghost.

229. During the second week they should apply themselves, during all their prayers and works each day, to know the Blessed Virgin. They should ask this knowledge of the Holy Ghost; they should read and meditate what we have said about it. They should recite, as in the first week, the litany of the Holy Ghost and the *Ave maris stella*, and in addition a Rosary daily, or, if not a whole Rosary, at least a chaplet, for the intention of impetrating more knowledge of Mary.

230. They should apply themselves in the third week to know Jesus Christ. They can meditate upon what we have said about Him, and say the prayer of St. Augustine, which they will find in the first part of this treatise. They can, with the same Saint, repeat a hundred times a day, *Noverim te*,—"Lord, that I might know Thee!" or *Domine, ut videam*,—"Lord, that I might see who Thou art!" They shall recite, as in the preceding weeks, the litany of the Holy Ghost and the *Ave maris stella*, and they shall add daily the litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.

231. At the end of the three weeks they shall confess and communicate, with the intention of giving themselves to Jesus Christ, in the quality of slaves of love, by the hands of Mary. After communion, which they should

try to make according to the method given farther on, they should recite the formula of their consecration, which they will find afterwards. They ought to write it, or have it written, unless it is printed; and they should sign it the same day they have made it.

232. It would be well also that on that day they should pay some tribute to Jesus Christ and our Blessed Lady, either as a penance for their past unfaithfulness to the vows of their Baptism, or in testimony of their dependence and allegiance to the domain of Jesus and Mary. This tribute ought to be according to the devotion and capacity of every one, as a fast, a mortification, an alms, or a candle. If they had but a pin to give in homage, yet gave it with a good heart, it would be enough for Jesus, who looks only at the good-will.

233. Once a year at least, on the same day, they should renew the same consecration, observing the same practices during the three weeks. They might also once a month, or even once a day, renew what they have done by these few words: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*,—"I am all for Thee, and all I have belongs to Thee, O my sweet Jesus, by Mary Thy holy Mother."

SECOND PRACTICE

234. They may recite every day of their life, without however making any burden of it, the Little Corona of the Blessed Virgin, composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys, in honour of our Lady's twelve privileges and grandeurs. This is a very ancient practice, for it has its foundation in the holy Scriptures. St. John saw a woman crowned with twelve stars, clothed with the sun, and holding the moon under her feet; and this woman, according to the interpreters, was the most holy Virgin.

235. There are many ways of saying this Corona well; but it would be too long to enter upon them. The Holy Ghost will teach them to those who are the most faithful to this devotion. Nevertheless, to say it quite simply we should begin by saying, *Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata, da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos*. After that we should say the Credo, and then a

Pater with four Aves, and then one Gloria Patri; then another Pater, four Aves, and one Gloria Patri, and so on with the rest; and at the end we should say the *Sub tuum præsidium*—"Under thy protection we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our needs, but from all dangers deliver us always, Virgin Glorious and Blessed."

THIRD PRACTICE

236. It is a most glorious and praiseworthy thing, and very useful to those who have thus made themselves slaves of Jesus and Mary, that they should wear, as a badge of their loving slavery, little iron chains, blessed with the proper benediction.⁵

It is perfectly true that these external badges are not essential, and a person who has embraced this devotion may very well go without them; nevertheless, I cannot refrain from warmly praising those who, after having shaken off the shameful chains of the slavery of the devil, in which original sin, and perhaps actual sins, had engaged them, have voluntarily surrendered themselves to the glorious slavery of Jesus Christ, and glory with St. Paul in being in chains for Jesus; chains a thousand times more glorious and precious, though of iron, than all the golden collars of emperors.

237. Once there was nothing more infamous on earth than the Cross, and now that wood is the most glorious boast of Christianity. Let us say the same of the irons of slavery. There was nothing more ignominious among the ancients; nothing more shameful even now among the heathen. But among Christians there is nothing more illustrious than the chains of Jesus; for they unchain us, and preserve us from the infamous fetters of sin and the devil. They set us at liberty, and chain us to Jesus and Mary; not by compulsion and constraint, like galley-slaves, but by charity and love, like children. *Traham eos in vinculis charitatis*,—"I will draw them to Me," said God by the mouth of the prophet, "by the chains of love." These chains are as strong as death, and they are in a certain sense strongest in those who are faithful in carrying these glorious badges to their death. For, though death destroys their bodies in bringing them to corruption, it does not destroy the

chains of their slavery, which, being of iron, do not corrupt so easily. Perhaps, at the day of the resurrection of the body, the grand last judgment, these chains shall still be round their bones, and shall make a part of their glory, and be transmuted into chains of light and splendour. Happy, then, a thousand times happy, the illustrious slaves of Jesus, who wear their chains even to the tomb!

238. The following are the reasons for wearing these little chains:

First, it is to remind the Christian of the vows and engagements of his Baptism, of the perfect renewal he has made of them by this devotion, and of the strict obligation under which he is to be faithful to them. As the man who shapes his course more often by the senses than by pure faith easily forgets his obligations towards God, unless he has some outward thing to remind him of them, these little chains serve marvellously to remind the Christian of the chains of sin, and of the slavery of the devil, from which Baptism has delivered him, and of the dependence on Jesus which he has vowed to Him in Baptism, and of the ratification of it which he has made by the renewal of his vows. One of the reasons why so few Christians think of their baptismal vows, and live with as much license as if they had promised no more to God than the heathen, is because they do not wear any external badge to make them remember it.

239. Secondly, it is to show that we are not ashamed of the servitude and slavery of Jesus Christ, and that we renounce the slavery of the world, sin, and the devil.

Thirdly, it is to guarantee ourselves from the chains of sin and the devil, and to be beforehand with them; for we must wear either the chains of iniquity, or the chains of charity and salvation.

240. *Vincula peccatorum aut vincula charitatis.* O my dear brother, let us break the chains of sin and of sinners, of the world and of worldliness, of the devil and his ministers; and let us cast far from us their depressing yoke: *Dirumpamus vincula eorum, et projiciamus a nobis jugum ipsorum.* Let us put our feet, to use the terms of the Holy Ghost, into His glorious irons, and

our neck into His collars: *Injice pedem tuum in compedes illius, et in torques illius collum tuum; subjice humerum tuum et porta illam, et ne acedieris vinculis ejus*. You will remark that the Holy Ghost, before saying these words, prepares a soul for them, lest it should reject His important counsel. See His words: *Audi, fili, et accipe consilium intellectus, et ne abjicias consilia mea*,—"Hearken, My son, and receive a counsel of understanding, and reject not My counsel."

241. You would wish, my very dear friend, that I should here unite myself to the Holy Ghost to give you the same counsel with Him. *Vincula illius alligatura salutis*,—His chains are chains of salvation. As Jesus Christ on the cross ought to draw all things to Him, with their will or against it, He will draw the reprobate by the chains of their sins, that He may chain them like galley-slaves and devils to His eternal anger and revengeful justice. But He will, and particularly in these latter times, draw the predestinate by the chains of charity. *Omnia traham ad meipsum. Traham eos in vinculis charitatis*.

242. These loving slaves of Jesus Christ, "the chained of Christ,"—*Vincti Christi*,—can wear their chains either on their neck or on their feet. Father Vincent Caraffa, seventh general of the Jesuits, who died in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1643, used to wear a circle of iron round his feet as a mark of his servitude; and said that his only pain was that he could not publicly drag a chain.

The Mother Agnes of Jesus, of whom we have spoken before, used to wear an iron chain round her body. Others have worn it round their neck, in penance for the collars of pearls which they have worn in the world; while others have worn it round their arms, to remind themselves, in their manual labours, that they were slaves of Jesus Christ.

FOURTH PRACTICE

243. Those who undertake this holy slavery should have a very special devotion to the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word on the 25th of March. Indeed, the Incarnation is the proper mystery of this practice,

inasmuch as it was a devotion inspired by the Holy Ghost, first, to honour and imitate the ineffable dependence which God the Son has been pleased to have on Mary, for His Father's glory and our salvation; which dependence particularly appears in this mystery, where Jesus is a captive and a slave in the bosom of the divine Mary, and depends upon her for all things; secondly, to thank God for the incomparable graces He has given Mary, and particularly for having chosen her to be His most holy Mother, which choice was made in this mystery. These are the two principal ends of the slavery of Jesus in Mary.

244. Have the goodness to observe that I generally say 'the slave of Jesus in Mary,' 'the slavery of Mary in Jesus.' I might, in good truth, as many have done before, say 'the slave of Mary,' 'the slavery of the holy Virgin;' but I think it is better to say 'the slave of Jesus in Mary,' as Mr. Tronson, superior general of the seminary in St. Sulpice, renowned for his rare prudence and consummate piety, counselled to an ecclesiastic who consulted him on the subject. The following were the reasons:

245. § 1. As we are living in an age of intellectual pride, and there are all round us numbers of puffed-up scholars and conceited and critical spirits, who have plenty to say against the best established and most solid practices of piety, it is better for us not to give them any needless occasion of criticism. Hence it is better for us to say 'the slavery of Jesus in Mary,' and to call ourselves the slaves of Jesus Christ rather than the slaves of Mary, taking the denomination of our devotion rather from its last end, which is Jesus Christ, than from the road and the means to the end, which Mary is; though I repeat that in truth we may do either, as I have done myself. For example: a man who goes from Orleans to Tours by way of Amboise may very well say that he is going to Amboise, or that he is going to Tours; that he is a traveller to Amboise, and a traveller to Tours; with this difference however, that Amboise is but his straight road to Tours, and that Tours only is the last end and term of his voyage.

246. § 2. A second reason is because the principal mystery we celebrate in honour of this devotion is the mystery of the Incarnation, where we can only see Jesus in Mary, and incarnate in her bosom. Hence it is more to the

purpose to speak of the slavery of Jesus in Mary, and of Jesus residing and reigning in Mary, according to that beautiful prayer of so many great men, “O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in us, in Thy spirit of sanctity,” &c.

247. § 3. Another reason is because this manner of speaking sets forth still more the intimate union which there is between Jesus and Mary. They are so intimately united, that the one is altogether in the other. Jesus is altogether in Mary, and Mary is altogether in Jesus; or rather, she exists no more, but Jesus is all alone in her, and it were easier to separate the light from the sun than Mary from Jesus. So that we might call our Lord *Jesus of Mary*, and our Blessed Lady *Mary of Jesus*.

248. The time would not permit me to stop now to explain the excellences and grandeurs of the mysteries of Jesus living and reigning in Mary, in other words, of the Incarnation of the Word. I will content myself with saying these three words: We have here the first mystery of Jesus Christ,—the most hidden, the most exalted, and the least known. It is in this mystery that Jesus, in His Mother’s womb, which is for that very reason called by the Saints the cabinet of the secrets of God, has, in concert with Mary, chosen all the elect. It is in this mystery that He has wrought all the other mysteries of His life by the acceptance which He made of them. *Jesus ingrediens mundum dicit, Ecce venio, ut faciam voluntatem tuam*. Consequently this mystery is an abridgment of all mysteries, and contains the will and grace of all. Finally, this mystery is the throne of the mercy, of the liberality, and of the glory of God. It is the throne of His mercy for us, because, as we cannot approach Jesus but by Mary, we can only see Jesus and speak to Him by her intercession. Jesus, who always hears His dear Mother, always grants His grace and mercy to poor sinners. *Adeamus ergo cum fiduciâ ad thronum gratiæ*. It is the throne of His liberality for Mary, because, while the new Adam dwelt in that true terrestrial Paradise, He worked so many miracles in secret, that neither Angels nor men can comprehend them. It is on this account that the Saints call Mary the magnificence of God,—*Magnificentia Dei*,—as if God were only magnificent in Mary: *solummodò ibi magnificus Dominus*. It is the throne of His glory for His Father, because it is in Mary that Jesus Christ has calmed His Father, irritated against men, and that He has made restitution of

the glory which sin ravished from Him, and that, by the sacrifice He made of His own will and of Himself, He has given Him more glory than ever the sacrifices of the Ancient Law could do, and He gives Him now an infinite glory, which He never could have received from man.

FIFTH PRACTICE

249. Those who adopt this slavery ought also to have a great devotion to saying the Hail Mary (the Angelical Salutation). Few Christians, however enlightened, know the real price, merit, excellence, and necessity of the Hail Mary. It was necessary for the Blessed Virgin to appear several times to great and enlightened Saints, to show them the merit of it. She did so to St. Dominic, St. John Capistran, and the Blessed Alan de la Roche. They have composed entire works on the wonders and efficacy of that prayer for converting souls. They have loudly published and openly preached that, salvation having begun with the Hail Mary, the salvation of each one of us in particular is attached to that prayer. They tell us that it is that prayer which made the dry and barren earth bring forth the fruit of life; and that it is that prayer well said which makes the Word of God germinate in our souls, and bring forth Jesus Christ, the Fruit of life. They tell us that the Hail Mary is a heavenly dew for watering the earth, which is the soul, to make it bring forth its fruit in season; and that a soul which is not watered by that prayer bears no fruit, and brings forth only thorns and brambles, and is ready to be cursed.

250. Listen to what our Lady revealed to the Blessed Alan de la Roche, as he has recorded it in his book on the dignity of the Rosary: “Know, my son, and make all others know, that it is a probable and proximate sign of eternal damnation to have an aversion, a lukewarmness, or a negligence, in saying the Angelical Salutation, which has repaired the whole world.” *Scias enim et securè intelligas et inde latè omnibus notum facias, quod videlicet signum probabile est et propinquum æternæ damnationis horrere et acediari, ac negligere Salutationem Angelicam, totius mundi reparationem.* These are words at once terrible and consoling, and which we should find it hard to believe, if we had not that holy man for a guarantee, and St. Dominic before him, and many great men since. But we have also the

experience of several ages; for it has always been remarked that those who wear the outward look of reprobation, like impious heretics and proud worldlings, hate or despise the Hail Mary or the Rosary.

Heretics still learn and say the Our Father, but not the Hail Mary, nor the Rosary. That is their horror. They would rather wear a serpent than a rosary.

The proud also, although Catholics, have the same inclinations as their father, Lucifer; and so have only contempt or indifference for the Hail Mary, and look at the Rosary as at a devotion which is only good for the ignorant and for those who cannot read. On the contrary it is an equally universal experience, that those who have otherwise great marks of predestination about them love and relish the Hail Mary, and delight in saying it. We always see the more a man is for God, the more he likes that prayer. This is what our Lady said also to the Blessed Alan, after the words which I have recently quoted.

251. I do not know how it is, nor why, but nevertheless I well know that it is true; nor have I any better secret of knowing whether a person is for God than to examine if he likes to say the Hail Mary and the Rosary. I say, *if he likes*; for it may happen that a person may be under some natural inability to say it, or even a supernatural one; yet nevertheless he likes it always, and always inspires the same liking into others.

252. O predestinate souls! slaves of Jesus in Mary! learn that the Hail Mary is the most beautiful of all prayers after the Our Father. It is the most perfect compliment which you can make to Mary, because it is the compliment which the Most High sent her by an archangel, in order to gain her heart; and it was so powerful over her heart by the secret charms of which it is so full, that in spite of her profound humility, she gave her consent to the Incarnation of the Word. It is by this compliment also that you will infallibly gain her heart, if you say it as you ought.

253. The Hail Mary well said, that is, with attention, devotion, and modesty, is, according to the Saints, the enemy of the devil, which puts him to flight, and the hammer which crushes him. It is the sanctification of the soul, the

joy of Angels, the melody of the predestinate, the canticle of the New Testament, the pleasure of Mary, and the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. The Hail Mary is a heavenly dew which fertilises the soul. It is the chaste and loving kiss which we give to Mary. It is a vermilion rose which we present to her; a precious pearl we offer her; a chalice of divine ambrosial nectar which we hold to her. All these are comparisons of the Saints.

254. I pray you urgently, by the love I bear you in Jesus and Mary, not to content yourselves with saying the Little Corona of the Blessed Virgin, but a whole Chaplet; or even, if you have time, the whole Rosary every day. At the moment of your death, you will bless the day and hour in which you have followed my advice. Having thus sown in the benedictions of Jesus and Mary, you will reap eternal benedictions in heaven: *qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet.*

SIXTH PRACTICE

255. To thank God for the graces He has given to our Lady, those who adopt this devotion will often say the Magnificat, as the Blessed Mary d'Oignies did, and many other Saints. It is the only prayer, the only work, which the holy Virgin composed, or rather which Jesus composed in her; for He spoke by her mouth. It is the greatest sacrifice of praise which God ever received from a pure creature in the law of grace. It is, on the one hand, the most humble and grateful, and on the other hand, the most sublime and exalted, of all canticles. There are in that song mysteries so great and hidden, that the Angels do not know them. The pious and erudite Gerson employed a great part of his life in composing works upon most difficult subjects; and yet it was only at the close of his career, and even then with trembling, that he undertook to comment on the Magnificat, so as to crown all his other works. He wrote a folio volume on it, and brings forward many admirable things about that beautiful and divine canticle. Among other things, he says that our Lady often repeated it herself, and especially for thanksgiving after Communion. The learned Benzonius, in explaining the same Magnificat, relates many miracles wrought by the virtue of it, and says that the devils tremble and fly when they hear these words: *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui*

—“He has shown strength with his arm, and has scattered the proud in the conceit of his own heart”

SEVENTH PRACTICE

256. Those faithful servants of Mary, who adopt this devotion, ought always greatly to despise, to hate, and to eschew the corrupted world, and to make use of those practices of the contempt of the world which we have given in the first part of this treatise.



2. PARTICULAR AND INTERIOR PRACTICES FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO BE PERFECT

257. Besides the external practices of the devotion which we have been describing so far, and which we must not omit through negligence or contempt, so far as the state and condition of each one will allow him to observe them, there are some very sanctifying interior practices for those whom the Holy Ghost calls to high perfection.

These may be expressed in four words: to do all our actions *by* Mary, *with* Mary, *in* Mary, and *for* Mary; so that we may do them all the more perfectly *by* Jesus, *with* Jesus, *in* Jesus, and *for* Jesus.

258. I. We must do our actions *by* Mary; that is to say, we must obey her in all things, and in all things conduct ourselves by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God,—*Qui spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei*. Those who are led by the spirit of Mary are the children of Mary, and consequently the children of God, as we have shown; and among so many clients of the Blessed Virgin, none are true or faithful but those who are led by her spirit. I have said that the spirit of Mary was the Spirit of God, because she was never led by her own spirit, but always by the Holy Ghost, who has rendered Himself so completely master of her, that He has become her own proper spirit. It is on this account that St. Ambrose says: *Sit in singulis Mariæ anima, ut magnificet Dominum; sit in singulis spiritus Mariæ, ut exsultet in Deo*, —“Let the soul of Mary be in each of us to magnify the Lord, and the spirit of Mary be in each of us to rejoice in God.” A soul is happy indeed, when, like the good Jesuit lay brother, Alphonso Rodriguez, who died in the odour of sanctity, it is all possessed and over-ruled by the spirit of Mary, a spirit meek and strong, zealous and prudent, humble and courageous, pure and profound.

259. In order that the soul may let itself be led by Mary's spirit, it must first of all renounce its own spirit, and its own proper lights and wills, before it does any thing. For example: it should do so before its prayer, before its saying or hearing Mass, and before communicating; because the darkness of our own spirit, and the malice of our own will and operation, if we follow them, however good they may appear to us, will put an obstacle to the spirit of Mary. Secondly, we must deliver ourselves to the spirit of Mary to be moved and influenced by it in the manner she chooses. We must put ourselves and leave ourselves in her virginal hands, like a tool in the grasp of a workman, like a lute in the hands of a skilful player. We must lose ourselves, and abandon ourselves to her, like a stone one throws into the sea. This must be done simply and in an instant, by one glance of the mind, by one little movement of the will, or even verbally, in saying, for example, I renounce myself; I give myself to thee, my dear Mother. We may not, perhaps, feel any sensible sweetness in this act of union, but it is not on that account the less real. It is just as if we were to say with equal sincerity, though without any sensible change in ourselves, what, may it please God, we never shall say, I give myself to the devil; we should not the less truly belong to the devil because we did not *feel* we belonged to him. Thirdly, we must, from time to time, both during and after the action, renew the same act and offering of union. The more we shall do so, the more we shall be sanctified; and we shall all the sooner attain to union with Jesus Christ, which always follows necessarily on our union with Mary, because the spirit of Mary is the spirit of Jesus.

260. II. We must do our actions *with* Mary; that is to say, we must in all our actions regard Mary as an accomplished model of every virtue and perfection which the Holy Ghost has formed in a pure creature, for us to imitate according to our little measure. We must therefore in every action consider how Mary has done it, or how she would have done it, had she been in our place. For that end we must examine and meditate the great virtues which she practised during her life, and particularly, first of all, her lively faith, by which she believed without hesitation the Angel's word, and believed it faithfully and constantly up to the foot of the Cross; 2dly, her profound humility, which made her hide herself, hold her peace, submit to every thing, and put herself the last of all; and 3dly, her altogether divine

purity, which never has had, and never can have, its equal under heaven; and so on with all her other virtues. Let us remember, I repeat it for the second time, that Mary is the great and exclusive mould of God, proper to make living images of God, at small cost and in a little time; and that a soul which has found that mould, and has lost itself in it, is presently changed into Jesus Christ, whom that mould represents to the life.

261. III. We must do our actions *in* Mary. Thoroughly to understand this practice, we must know, first, that our Blessed Lady is the true terrestrial paradise of the new Adam, and that the ancient Paradise was but a figure of her. There are, then, in this earthly paradise, riches, beauties, rarities, and inexplicable sweetnesses, which Jesus Christ, the new Adam, has left there; it was in this paradise that He took His complacency for nine months, worked His wonders, and displayed His riches with the magnificence of a God. This most holy place is composed only of a virgin and immaculate earth, of which the new Adam was formed, and on which He was nourished, without any spot or stain, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who dwelt there. It is in this earthly paradise that there is the true tree of life, which has borne Jesus Christ, the Fruit of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which has given light unto the world. There are in this divine place trees planted by the hand of God, and watered by His Divine unction, which have borne and daily bear fruits of a taste divine. There are flower-beds, enamelled with beautiful and various blossoms; virtues, shedding odours which embalm the very Angels. There are meadows green with hope, impregnable towers of strength, and the most enticing houses of confidence. It is but the Holy Ghost who can make us know the hidden truth of these figures of material things. There are in this place an air of perfect purity; a fair sun, without the shadow of the Divinity; a fair day, without the night of the Sacred Humanity; a continual burning furnace of love, where all the iron that is cast into it is changed, by excessive heat, to gold. There is a river of humility, which springs from the earth, and which, dividing itself into four branches, waters all that enchanted place; and these are the four cardinal virtues.

262. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Fathers, also styles the Blessed Virgin the Eastern Gate, by which the High-Priest, Jesus Christ, enters the

world and leaves it. By it He came the first time, and by it He will come the second.

In the next place, to comprehend thoroughly the practice of doing our actions *in* Mary, we must know that the most holy Virgin is the Sanctuary of the Divinity, the repose of the Most Holy Trinity, the throne of God, the city of God, the altar of God, the temple of God, the world of God. All these different epithets and panegyrics are most substantially true, with reference to the different marvels which the Most High has wrought in Mary. Oh, what riches! what glory! what pleasure! what happiness! to be able to enter in and dwell in Mary, where the Most High has set up the throne of His supreme glory!

263. But how difficult it is for sinners like ourselves to have the permission, the capacity, and the light, to enter into a place so high and so holy, which is guarded not by one of the Cherubim, like the old earthly Paradise, but by the Holy Ghost Himself, who is its absolute master! He Himself has said of it, *Hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus*; Mary is shut, Mary is sealed. The miserable children of Adam and Eve, driven from the earthly Paradise, cannot enter into this one, except by a particular grace of the Holy Ghost, which they ought to merit.

264. After we have obtained this illustrious grace by our fidelity, we must remain in the fair interior of Mary with complacency, repose there in peace, lean our weight there in confidence, hide ourselves there with assurance, and lose ourselves there without reserve. Thus, in that virginal bosom, 1, the soul shall be nourished with the milk of grace and maternal mercy; 2, it shall be delivered from its troubles, fears, and scruples; and, 3, it shall be in safety against all its enemies,—the world, the devil, and sin,—who never have an entrance there. It is on this account that Mary says that they who work in her shall not sin: *Qui operantur in me, non peccabunt*; that is to say, those who dwell in Mary's spirit shall fall into no considerable fault. Lastly, 4, the soul shall be formed in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in it, because her bosom is, as the holy Fathers say, the chamber of the divine Sacraments, where Jesus Christ and all the elect have been formed.

265. IV. Finally, we must do all our actions *for* Mary. As we have given ourselves up entirely to her service, it is but just to do every thing for her, as a servant and a slave. It is not that we can take her for the last end of our services, for that is Jesus Christ alone; but we may take her for our proximate end, our mysterious means, and our easy way to go to Him. Like a good servant and slave, we must not remain idle, but, supported by her protection, we must undertake and achieve great things for this august sovereign. We must defend her privileges when they are disputed; we must stand up for her glory when it is attacked; we must entice all the world, if we can, to her service and to this true and solid devotion; we must speak and cry out against those who abuse her devotion to outrage her Son, and we must at the same time establish this Veritable Devotion; we must pretend to no recompense for our little services, except the honour of belonging to so sweet a Queen, and the happiness of being united by her to Jesus her Son by an indissoluble tie in time and in eternity.

Glory to Jesus in Mary!

Glory to Mary in Jesus!

Glory to God Alone!



MANNER OF PRACTISING THIS DEVOTION TO OUR LADY, WHEN WE GO TO HOLY COMMUNION

1. BEFORE COMMUNION

266. (1) You must humble yourself most profoundly before God. (2) You must renounce your corrupt interior, and your dispositions, however good your own self-love may make them look. (3) You must renew your consecration by saying, *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*,—I am all thine, my dear Mistress, with all I have. (4) You must implore that good Mother to lend you her heart, that you may receive her Son there with the same dispositions as her own. You will represent to her that it touches her Son's glory, to be put into a heart so sullied and so inconstant as yours, which would not fail either to lessen His Glory or to destroy it. But if she will come and dwell with you, in order to receive her Son, she can do so by the dominion which she has over all hearts; and her Son will be well received by her, without stains, and without danger of being outraged or destroyed. *Deus in medio ejus, non commovebitur*. You will tell her confidently, that all you have given her of your good is a little matter to honour her; but that by the Holy Communion you wish to make her the same present as the Eternal Father gave her, and that you will honour her more by that than if you gave her all the goods in the world; and, finally, that Jesus, who loves her alone, still desires to take His pleasure and His repose in her, even in your soul, though it be filthier far and poorer than the stable where He made no difficulty to come, simply because she was there. You will ask her for her heart by these tender words: *Accipio te in mea omnia, præbe mihi cor tuum, O Maria!*

2. AT COMMUNION

267. On the point of receiving Jesus Christ, after the Our Father, you say three times, *Domine non sum dignus*. Say the first one to the Eternal Father, telling Him you are not worthy, because of your evil thoughts and ingratitude towards so good a Father, to receive His only Son; but that He is to behold Mary, His handmaid,—*Ecce ancilla Domini*,—who acts for us, and who gives us a singular confidence and hope with His Majesty: *Quoniam singulariter in spe constituisti me*.

268. You shall say to the Son, *Domine non sum dignus*; telling Him that you are not worthy to receive Him, because of your idle and evil words, and your infidelity to His service; but that nevertheless you pray Him to have pity upon you, that you may introduce Him into the house of His Own Mother, and yours, and that you will not let Him go, without His coming to lodge with her. *Tenui eum, nec dimittam donec introducām illum in domum matris meæ, et in cubiculum genitricis meæ* (Cant. 3:4). You will pray Him to rise, and come to the place of His repose, and into the ark of His Sanctification: *Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu et arca sanctificationis tuæ*. Tell Him you put no confidence at all in your own merits, your own strength, and your own preparations, as Esau did; but that you trust only in Mary, your dear Mother, as the little Jacob did in the cares of Rebecca. Tell Him that, sinner and Esau as you are, you dare to approach His Sanctity, supported and adorned, as you are, with the virtues of His holy Mother.

269. You shall say to the Holy Ghost, *Domine non sum dignus*; telling Him that you are not worthy to receive this masterpiece of His charity, because of the lukewarmness and iniquity of your actions, and because of your resistances to His inspirations; but that all your confidence is in Mary, His faithful Spouse. You shall say with St. Bernard, *Hæc mea maxima fiducia, hæc tota ratio spei meæ*. You can pray even Him to come Himself in Mary, His indissoluble Spouse, telling Him that her bosom is as pure, and her heart as burning as ever; and that without His descent into your soul neither Jesus nor Mary will be formed, nor yet worthily lodged.

3. AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

270. After Holy Communion, while you are inwardly recollected and holding your eyes shut, you will introduce Jesus into the heart of Mary. You will give Him to His Mother, who will receive Him lovingly, will place Him honourably, will adore Him profoundly, will love Him perfectly, will embrace Him closely, and will render to Him, in spirit and in truth, many homages which are unknown to us in our thick darkness.

271. Or else you will keep yourself profoundly humbled in your heart, in the presence of Jesus residing in Mary. Or you will sit like a slave at the gate of the king's palace, where he is speaking with the queen; and while they talk one to the other without need of you, you will go in spirit to heaven and over all the earth, praying all creatures to thank, adore, and love Jesus and Mary in your place: *Venite, adoremus, venite*.

272. Or else you shall yourself ask of Jesus, in union with Mary, the coming of His kingdom on earth, through His holy Mother; or you shall sue for the Divine wisdom, or for Divine love, or for the pardon of your sins, or for some other grace; but always *by* Mary and *in* Mary, saying, while you look aside at yourself, *Ne respicias, Domine, peccata mea*,—"Lord, look not at my sins;" *Sed oculi tui videant æquitates Mariæ*,—"But let your eyes look at nothing in me but the virtues and merits of Mary:" and then, remembering your sins, you shall add, *Inimicus homo hoc fecit*,—"It is I who have committed these sins;" or you shall say, *Ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me*; or else, *Te oportet crescere, me autem minui*,—"My Jesus, you must increase in my soul, and I must decrease; Mary, you must increase within me, and I must be still less than I have been." *Crescite et multiplicamini*,—"O Jesus and Mary, increase in me, and multiply yourselves outside in others also."

273. There are an infinity of other thoughts which the Holy Ghost furnishes, and will furnish you, if you are thoroughly interior, mortified, and faithful to this grand and sublime devotion which I have been teaching you. But always remember that the more you leave Mary to act in your Communion, the more Jesus will be glorified. The more you leave Mary to act for Jesus, and Jesus to act in Mary, the more profoundly will you humble yourself, and will listen to them in peace and silence, without putting yourself in

trouble about seeing, tasting, or feeling; for the just man lives throughout on faith, and particularly in Holy Communion, which is an action of faith.
Justus meus ex fide vivit.

33-DAY PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION TO MARY

Saint Louis de Montfort's formula of total consecration to Jesus through Mary is not to be taken lightly. This is evidenced from the fact that the Saint himself advocates a serious preparation consisting of twelve preliminary days, in which the soul endeavours to rid itself of the spirit of the world as opposed to the spirit of Christ.

This is followed by three weeks of prayer and meditation during which the soul strives to acquire a better knowledge of self (First Week), of Mary (Second Week), and of Jesus Christ (Third Week). Though this preliminary period is strongly recommended, it is obvious that the length of time devoted to such a preparation may vary according to one's personal needs and circumstances.

This culminates in the final Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin that you may renew yearly or monthly, or even every day by giving all your actions to Mary. One of the most fruitful ways to carry out this consecration in your every-day life is to say the Holy Rosary every day.

INITIAL 12-DAY PREPARATION

EMPTYING YOURSELF OF THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

Examine your conscience, pray, practice renouncement of your own will; mortification, purity of heart. This purity is the indispensable condition for contemplating God in heaven, to see Him on earth and to know Him by the light of faith. The first part of the preparation should be employed in casting off the spirit of the world, which is contrary to that of Jesus Christ. The spirit of the world consists essentially in the denial of the supreme dominion of God; a denial which is manifested in practice by sin and disobedience; thus it is principally opposed to the spirit of Christ, which is also that of Mary.

It manifests itself by the concupiscence of the flesh, by the concupiscence of the eyes and by the pride of life, by disobedience to God's laws and the abuse of created things. Its works are: sin in all forms, then all else by which the devil leads to sin; works which bring error and darkness to the mind, and seduction and corruption to the will. Its pomp's are the splendour, and the charms employed by the devil to render sin alluring in persons, places and things.

DAY 1

Today's Reading: *Matthew 5:1–19*

¹And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him. ²And opening his mouth, he taught them, saying ³Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. ⁵Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. ⁶Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. ⁷Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: ¹²Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you. ¹³You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. ¹⁶So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. ¹⁷Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. ¹⁸For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the

kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 2

Today's Reading: *Matthew 5:48, 6:1–15*

⁴⁸Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. . . . ¹Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. ²Therefore when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. ⁴That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. ⁵And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. ⁷And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. ⁸Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask him. ⁹Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen. ¹⁴For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. ¹⁵But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 3

Today's Reading: *Matthew 7:1–14*

¹Judge not, that you may not be judged, ²For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³Any why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? ⁴Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? ⁵Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam in thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. ⁶Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you. ⁷Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. ⁸For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. ⁹Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? ¹¹If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him? ¹²All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. ¹³Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. ¹⁴How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

Ave Maris Stella

Magnificat

Glory Be

DAY 4

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapters 7, 40*

That man has no good of himself, and that he cannot glory in anything Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visit him? What has man deserved that Thou should give him grace? Lord, what cause have I to complain, if Thou forsakest me, or what can I justly allege, if what I petition Thou shalt not grant? This most assuredly, I may truly think and say: Lord I am nothing, I can do nothing of myself, that is good, but I am in all things defective and ever tend to nothing. And unless I am assisted and interiorly instructed by Thee, I become wholly tepid and relaxed, but Thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest unto eternity, ever good, just and holy, doing all things well, justly and holily and disposing them in wisdom.

But I who am more inclined to go back, than to go forward, continue not always in one state, for I am changed, seven different times. But it quickly becomes better when it pleases Thee, and Thou stretchest out Thy helping hand: for Thou alone, without man's aid can assist me and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be more diversely changed: but my heart be converted and find its rest in Thee alone.

He who would be too secure in time of peace will often be found too much dejected in time of war. If you could always continue to be humble and little in your own eyes, and keep your spirit in due order and subjection, you would not fall so easily into danger and offense. It is good counsel that, when you have conceived the spirit of fervor, you should meditate how it will be when that light shall be withdrawn.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 5

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapter 40*

Wherefore, but I did know well, how to cast from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity by which I am compelled to seek Thee, because there is no man that can comfort me. Then might I deservedly hope in Thy favor, and rejoice in the gift of a new consolation. Thanks be to Thee from Whom all things proceed, as often as it happens to me. I, indeed, am but vanity, and nothing in Thy sight, an inconstant and weak man. Where, therefore, can I glory, or for what do I desire to be thought of highly?

Forsooth of my very nothingness; and this is most vain. Truly vainglory is an evil plague, because it draws away from true glory, and robs us of heavenly grace. For, while a man takes complacency in himself, he displeases Thee; while he wants for human applause, he is deprived of true virtues. But true, glory and holy exultation is to glory in Thee, and not in one's self; to rejoice in Thy Name, but not in one's own strength. To find pleasure in no creature, save only for Thy sake.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 6

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 18*

On the Example of the Holy Fathers

Look upon the lively examples of the holy Fathers in whom shone real perfection and the religious life, and you will see how little it is, and almost nothing that we do. Alas, what is our life when we compare it with theirs? Saints and friends of Christ, they served our Lord in hunger and in thirst, in cold, in nakedness, in labor and in weariness, in watching, in fasting, prayers and holy meditations, and in frequent persecutions and reproaches. Oh, how many grievous tribulations did the Apostles suffer and the Martyrs and Confessors and Virgins, and all the rest who resolved to follow the steps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them in life everlasting. Oh what a strict and self-renouncing life the holy Fathers of the desert led! What long and grievous temptations did they bear! How often were they harassed by the enemy, what frequent and fervent prayers did they offer up to God, what rigorous abstinence did they practice!

What a valiant contest waged they to subdue their imperfections! What purity and straightforwardness of purpose kept them towards God! By day they laboured, and much of the night they spent in prayer; though while they laboured, they were far from leaving off mental prayer. They spent all their time profitably. Every hour seemed short to spend with God; and even their necessary bodily refreshment was forgotten in the great sweetness of contemplation. They renounced all riches, dignities, honours and kindred; they hardly took what was necessary for life. It grieved them to serve the body even in its necessity. Accordingly, they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 7

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 18 (continued)*

Outwardly they suffered want, but within they were refreshed with grace and Divine consolation. They were aliens to the world; they seemed as nothing and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the sight of God. They persevered in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience, and so every day they advanced in spirit and gained great favour with God. They were given for example to all religious, and ought more to excite us to advance in good, than the number of lukewarm to induce us to grow remiss. Oh! how great was the fervour of all religious in the beginning of their holy institute! Oh, how great was their devotion in prayer, how great was their zeal for virtue! How vigorous the discipline that was kept up, what reverence and obedience, under the rule of the superior, flourished in all! Their traces that remain still bear witness, that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet. Now, he is thought great who is not a transgressor; and who can, with patience, endure what he has undertaken. Ah, the lukewarm and negligence of our state! That we soon fall away from our first fervour, and are even now tired with life, from slothfulness and tepidity. Oh that advancement in virtue be not quite asleep in thee, who has so often seen the manifold examples of the devout!

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

Glory Be

DAY 8

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 13*

Of Resisting Temptations

As long as we live in this world, we cannot be without temptations and tribulations. Hence it is written in Job "Man's life on earth is a temptation." Everyone therefore should be solicitous about his temptations and watch in prayer lest the devil find an opportunity to catch him: who never sleeps, but goes about, seeking whom he can devour. No one is so perfect and holy as sometimes not to have temptations and we can never be wholly free from them. Nevertheless, temptations are very profitable to man, troublesome and grievous though they may be, for in them, a man is humbled, purified and instructed. All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations and were purified by them. And they that could not support temptations, became reprobate, and fell away.

Many seek to flee temptations, and fall worse into them. We cannot conquer by flight alone, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. He who only declines them outwardly, and does not pluck out their root, will profit little; nay, temptations will sooner return and he will find himself in a worse condition. By degrees and by patience you will, by God's grace, better overcome them than by harshness and your own importunity. Take council the oftener in temptation, and do not deal harshly with one who is tempted; but pour in consolation, as thou wouldst wish to be done unto yourself. Inconstancy of mind and little confidence in God, is the beginning of all temptations. For as a ship without a helm is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who neglects and gives up his resolutions is tempted in many ways.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 9

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 13 (continued)*

Fire tries iron, and temptation a just man. We often know not what we are able to do, but temptations discover what we are. Still, we must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation; for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment he knocks. Whence a certain one has said "Resist beginnings; all too late the cure." When ills have gathered strength, by long delay, first there comes from the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination, afterwards delight, and the evil motion and consent and so, little by little the fiend does gain entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning. The longer anyone has been slothful in resisting, so much the weaker he becomes, daily in himself, and the enemy, so much the stronger in him. Some suffer grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others in the end and others are troubled nearly their whole life. Some are very lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and the equity of the ordinance of God who weighs man's condition and merits, and pre-ordaineth all things for the salvation of His elect. We must not, therefore, despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently pray to God to help us in every tribulation: Who, of a truth, according to the sayings of St. Paul, will make such issue with the temptation, that we are able to sustain it.

Let us then humble our souls under the hand of God in every temptation and tribulation, for the humble in spirit, He will save and exalt. In temptation and tribulations, it is proved what progress man has made; and there also is great merit, and virtue is made more manifest.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 10

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapter 10*

That it is sweet to despise the world and to serve God

Now, will I speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent. I will say in the hearing of my God and my King Who is on high: Oh, how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those that fear Thee! But what art Thou, for those who love Thee? What, to those who serve Thee with their whole heart? Unspeakable indeed is the sweetness of Thy contemplation, which Thou bestowest on those who love Thee. In this most of all hast Thou showed me the sweetness of Thy love, that when I had no being, Thou didst make me; and when I was straying far from Thee, Thou brought me back again, that I might serve Thee: and Thou hast commanded me to serve Thee. O Fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of Thee? How can I forget Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to remember me even after I was corrupted and lost? Beyond all hope Thou showest mercy to Thy servant; and beyond all desert, hast Thou manifested Thy grace and friendship. What return shall I make to Thee for this favour? For it is granted to all who forsake these things, to renounce the world, and to assume the monastic life. Is it much that I should serve Thee, Whom the whole creation is bound to serve? It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this does rather appear great and wonderful to me, that Thou vouchsafest to receive one so wretched and unworthy as Thy servant. It is a great honor, a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee, for they who willingly subject themselves to Thy holy service, shall have great grace. They shall experience the sweetest consolation of the Holy Spirit, Who for the love of Thee, have cast aside all carnal delight.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 11

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 25*

On the Fervent Amendment of our Whole Life

When a certain anxious person, who often times wavered between hope and fear, once overcome with sadness, threw himself upon the ground in prayer, before one of the altars in the Church and thinking these things in his mind, said "Oh, if I only knew how to persevere," that very instant he heard within him, this heavenly answer: "And if thou didst know this, what would thou do? Do now what you would do, and thou shall be perfectly secure." And immediately being consoled, and comforted, he committed himself to the Divine Will, and his anxious thoughts ceased. He no longer wished for curious things; searching to find out what would happen to him, but studied rather to learn what was the acceptable and perfect will of God for the beginning and the perfection of every good work.

"Hope in the Lord," said the Prophet, "And do all good, and inhabit the land, and thou shall be fed of the riches thereof." There is one thing that keeps many back from spiritual progress, and from fervor in amendment namely: the labor that is necessary for the struggle. And assuredly they especially advance beyond others in virtues, who strive the most manfully to overcome the very things which are the hardest and most contrary to them. For there a man does profit more and merit more abundant grace, when he does most to overcome himself and mortify his spirit. All have not, indeed, equal difficulties to overcome and mortify, but a diligent and zealous person will make a greater progress though he have more passions than another, who is well regulated but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

DAY 12

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 25 (continued)*

But if thou observest anything worthy of reproof, beware thou do not the same. And if at any time thou hast done it, labour quickly to amend thyself. As thine eye observeth others, so art thou by others noted again?

How sweet and pleasant a thing it is, to see brethren fervent and devout, obedient and well-disciplined! How sad and grievous a thing it is, to see them walk disorderly, not applying themselves to that for which they are called! How hurtful a thing it is, when they neglect the purpose of their calling and busy themselves in things not committed to their care!

Be mindful of the purpose thou hast embraced, and set always before thee the image of the Crucified. Good cause thou hast to be ashamed in looking upon the life of Jesus Christ, seeing thou hast not as yet endeavoured to conform thyself more unto Him, though thou hast been a long time in the way of God. A religious person that exerciseth himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, shall there abundantly find whatsoever is profitable and necessary for him, neither shall he need to seek any better thing, besides Jesus. O if Jesus crucified would come into our hearts, how quickly and fully learned should we be. A man fervent and diligent is prepared for all things.

It is harder toil to resist vices and passions, than to sweat in bodily labours. He that avoideth not small faults, by little and little falleth into greater. Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably. Be watchful over thyself, stir up thyself, warn thyself, and whatsoever becometh of others, neglect not thyself. The more violent thou uses against thyself, the more shalt thou progress. Amen.

PRAYERS

[Veni Creator Spiritus](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Magnificat](#)

[Glory Be](#)

WEEK ONE

OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF YOURSELF

PRAYERS, examinations, reflection, acts of renouncement of our own will, of contrition for our sins, of contempt of self, all performed at the feet of Mary, for it is from her that we hope for light to know ourselves. It is near her, we shall be able to measure the abyss of our miseries without despairing.

We should employ all our pious actions in asking for knowledge of ourselves and contrition of our sins: and we should do this in a spirit of piety. During this period, we shall consider not so much the opposition that exists between the spirit of Jesus and ours, as the miserable and humiliating state to which our sins have reduced us. Moreover, the True Devotion being an easy, short, sure and perfect way to arrive at that union with Our Lord which is Christ like perfection, we shall enter seriously upon this way, strongly convinced of our misery and helplessness. But how attain this without knowledge of ourselves’?

DAY 13

Today's Reading: *Luke 11:1–10*

¹And it came to pass, that as he was in a certain place praying, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. ²And he said to them: When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. ³Give us this day our daily bread. ⁴And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.

⁵And he said to them: Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him. ⁷And he from within should answer, and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. ⁸Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth.

⁹And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you. ¹⁰For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 14

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapter 13*

Of the Obedience of One in Humble Subjection, After the Example of Jesus Christ

My son, he that endeavoreth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace; and he who seeketh for himself private benefit (Matt. 16:24), loseth those which are common. He that doth not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient unto him, but oftentimes kicketh and murmureth against him. Learn thou therefore quickly to submit thyself to thy superior, if thou desire to keep thine own flesh under the yoke. For more speedily is the outward enemy overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste. There is neither worse nor more troublesome enemy to the soul than thou art unto thyself, if thou be not well in harmony with the Spirit. It is altogether necessary that thou take up a true contempt for thyself, if thou desire to prevail against flesh and blood. Because as yet thou lovest thyself too inordinately, therefore thou art afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others. And yet, what great matter is it, if thou, who art but dust and nothing, subject thyself to a man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most Highest who created all things of nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for thy sake?

I became of all men the most humble and the most abject (Luke 2:7; John 13:14), that thou mightest overcome thy pride with My humility. O dust! Learn to be obedient. Learn to humble thyself, thou earth and clay, and to bow thyself down under the feet of all men. Learn to break thine own wishes, and to yield thyself to all subjection.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 15

Today's Reading: *Luke 13:1–5*

Examples Inviting Repentance

¹And there were present, at that very time, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answering, said to them: Think you that these Galileans were sinners above all the men of Galilee, because they suffered such things? ³No, I say to you: but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen upon whom the tower fell in Siloe, and slew them: think you, that they also were debtors above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I say to you; but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Nos. 81 and 82

We Need Mary in order to Die to Ourselves

Secondly, in order to empty ourselves of ourselves, we must die to ourselves daily. That is to say, we must renounce the operations of the powers of our soul, and of the senses of our body. We must see as if we saw not, understand as if we understood not, and make use of the things of this world as if we made no use of them at all. This is what St. Paul calls dying daily,—*Quotidie morior*. If the grain of corn falling on the earth does not die, it remains earth, and brings forth no good fruit. *Nisi granum frumenti, cadens in terram, mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet*. If we die not to ourselves, and if our holiest devotions do not incline us to this necessary and useful death, we shall bring forth no fruit worth any thing, and our devotions will become useless.

We must choose, therefore, among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin, the one which draws us most towards this death to ourselves, inasmuch as it will be the best and the most sanctifying.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 16

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, No. 228*

Preparatory Exercises

During the first week they should employ all their prayers and pious actions in asking for a knowledge of themselves, and for contrition of their sins; and they should do this in a spirit of humility. For that end they can, if they choose, meditate on what I have said before of our inward corruption. They can look upon themselves during the six days of this week as snails, crawling things, toads, swine, serpents, and unclean animals; or they can reflect on those three considerations of St. Bernard, the vileness of our origin, the dishonours of our present state, and our ending as the food of worms. They should pray our Lord and the Holy Ghost to enlighten them; and for that end they might use the ejaculations, *Domine, ut videam*, or *Noverim me*, or *Veni Sancte Spiritus*; and they may say daily the *Ave maris stella*, and the litany of the Holy Ghost.

Imitation of Christ: Book 2, Chapter 5

Of Self-consideration

We cannot trust over much to ourselves (Jer. 17:5), because grace oftentimes is wanting to us, and understanding also. Little light is there in us, and this we quickly lose by our negligence. Oftentimes too we perceive not our inward blindness how great it is. Oftentimes we do evil, and excuse it worse (Psalm 141:4). We are sometimes moved with passion, and we think it zeal. We reprehend small things in others, and pass over our own greater matters (Matt. 7:5). Quickly enough we feel and weigh what we suffer at the hands of others; but we mind not how much others suffer from

us. He that well and rightly considereth his own works, will find little cause to judge hardly of another.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 17

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 24*

Of Judgment, and the Punishment of Sinners

In all things look to the end; and how thou wilt stand before that strict Judge (Heb. 10:31) to whom nothing is hid, who is not appeased with gifts, nor admitteth excuses, but will judge according to right. O wretched and foolish sinner, who sometimes art in terror at the countenance of an angry man, what answer wilt thou make to God who knoweth all thy wickedness (Job 9:2)! Why dost thou not provide for thyself (Luke 16:9) against the day of judgement, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but everyone shall be a sufficient burden for himself!

Luke 16:1–8

The Crafty Steward

¹And he said also to his disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods.

²And he called him, and said to him: How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer.

⁴And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. ⁵Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? ⁶But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to

another: ⁷And how much dost thou owe? Who said: An hundred quarters of wheat? He said to him: Take thy bill, and write eighty. ⁸And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 18

Today's Reading: *Luke 17:1–10*

On Leading Others Astray

¹And he said to his disciples: It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come. ²It were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.

On Brotherly Correction

³Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him: and if he do penance, forgive him. ⁴And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted unto thee, saying, I repent; forgive him.

The Power of Faith

⁵And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith. ⁶And the Lord said: If you had faith like to a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea: and it would obey you.

Humble Service

⁷But which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say to him, when he is come from the field: Immediately go, sit down to meat:

⁸And will not rather say to him: Make ready my supper, and gird thyself, and serve me, whilst I eat and drink, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? ⁹Doth he thank that servant, for doing the things which he commanded him? ¹⁰I think not. So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.

Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapter 47

That All Grievous Things Are to Be Endured For the Sake of Eternal Life

My son, be not wearied out by the labours which thou hast undertaken for My sake, nor let tribulation cast thee down ever at all; but let My promise strengthen and comfort thee under every circumstance. I am well able to reward thee, above all measure and degree. Thou shalt not long toil here, nor always be oppressed with griefs. Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of thine evils.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

DAY 19

Today's Reading: *Luke 18:15–30*

Jesus and the Children

¹⁵And they brought unto him also infants, that he might touch them. Which when the disciples saw, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus, calling them together, said: Suffer children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁷Amen, I say to you: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it.

The Rich Aristocrat

¹⁸And a certain ruler asked him, saying: Good master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life? ¹⁹And Jesus said to him: Why dost thou call me good? None is good but God alone. ²⁰Thou knowest the commandments: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Honour thy father and mother. ²¹Who said: All these things have I kept from my youth. ²²Which when Jesus had heard, he said to him: Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. ²³He having heard these things, became sorrowful; for he was very rich.

The Danger of Riches

²⁴And Jesus seeing him become sorrowful, said: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁷And they that heard it, said: Who then can be saved? He said to them: The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God.

The Reward of Renunciation

²⁸Then Peter said: Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee. ²⁹Who said to them: Amen, I say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, ³⁰Who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

WEEK TWO

OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

ACTS OF LOVE, pious affections for the Blessed Virgin, imitation of her virtues, especially her profound humility, her lively faith, her blind obedience, her continual mental prayer, her mortification in all things, her surpassing purity, her ardent charity, her heroic patience, her angelic sweetness, and her divine wisdom: “there being,” as St. Louis De Montfort says, “the ten principal virtues of the Blessed Virgin.”

We must unite ourselves to Jesus through Mary—this is the characteristic of our devotion; therefore, Saint Louis De Montfort asks that we employ ourselves in acquiring knowledge of the Blessed Virgin.

Mary is our sovereign and our mediator our Mother and our Mistress. Let us then endeavour to know the effects of this royalty, of this mediation, and of this maternity, as well as the grandeurs and prerogatives, which are the foundation or consequences thereof. Our Mother is also a perfect mould wherein we are to be moulded in order to make her intentions and dispositions ours. This we cannot achieve without studying the interior life of Mary; namely, her virtues, her sentiments, her actions, her participation in the mysteries of Christ, and her union with Him.

DAY 20

Today's Reading: Luke 2:16–21, 45–52

¹⁶And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. ¹⁷And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all that heard, wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. ²¹And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called JESUS, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.

⁴⁵And not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶And it came to pass, that, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. ⁴⁸And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. ⁴⁹And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father's business? ⁵⁰And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. ⁵¹And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 21

Today's Reading: *The Secret of Mary: Nos. 23–24*

True Devotion to Our Blessed Lady

If we would go up to God, and be united with Him, we must use the same means He used to come down to us to be made Man and to impart His graces to us. This means is a true devotion to our Blessed Lady. There are several true devotions to our Lady: here I do not speak of those which are false. The first consists in fulfilling our Christian duties, avoiding mortal sin, acting more out of love than with fear, praying to our Lady now and then, honouring her as the Mother of God, yet without having any special devotion to her. The second consists in entertaining for our Lady more perfect feelings of esteem and love, of confidence and veneration. It leads us to join the Confraternities of the Holy Rosary and of the Scapular, to recite the five decades (the fifteen mysteries) of the Holy Rosary, to honour Mary's images and altars, to publish her praises and to enrol ourselves in her sodalities. This devotion is good, holy and praiseworthy if we keep ourselves free from sin. But it is not so perfect as the next, nor so efficient in severing our soul from creatures, in detaching ourselves in order to be united with Jesus Christ. The third devotion to our Lady, known and practiced by very few persons, is this I am about to disclose to you, predestined soul. It consists in giving one's self entirely and as a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through Mary, and after that, to do all that we do, through Mary, with Mary in Mary and for Mary. We should choose a special feast day on which we give, consecrate and sacrifice to Mary voluntarily, lovingly and without constraint, entirely and without reserve: our body and soul, our exterior property such as house, family and income, and also our interior and spiritual possessions: namely, our merits, graces, virtues, and satisfactions.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 22

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 106–110*

Marks of authentic devotion to our Lady

True devotion to our Lady is *interior*; that is to say, it comes from the spirit and the heart. It flows from the esteem we have of her, the high idea we have formed of her greatness, and the love which we have for her.

It is *tender*; that is to say, full of confidence in her, like a child's confidence in his loving mother. This confidence makes the soul have recourse to her in all its bodily or mental necessities, with much simplicity, trust, and tenderness.

True devotion to our Lady is *holy*; that is to say, it leads the soul to avoid sin, and to imitate in the Blessed Virgin particularly her profound humility, her lively faith, her continual prayer, her universal mortification, her divine purity, her ardent charity, her heroic patience, her angelical sweetness, and her divine wisdom. These are the ten principal virtues of the most holy Virgin.

True devotion to our Lady is *constant*. It confirms the soul in good, and it does not let it easily abandon its spiritual exercises. It makes it courageous in opposing the world in its fashions and maxims, the flesh in its wearinesses and passions, and the devil in his temptations. So that a person truly devout to our Blessed Lady is neither changeable, irritable, scrupulous, nor timid.

Lastly, true devotion to our Blessed Lady is *disinterested*; that is to say, it inspires the soul not to seek itself but God only, and God in His holy Mother. A true client of Mary does not serve that august Queen from a spirit

of lucre and interest, nor for its own good, whether temporal, corporal, or spiritual; but exclusively because she merits to be served, and God alone in her.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 23

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 120–121*

Nature of perfect Devotion to the Blessed Virgin or perfect consecration to Jesus Christ

All our perfection consists in being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ; and therefore the most perfect of all devotions is, without any doubt, that which the most perfectly conforms, unites, and consecrates us to Jesus Christ. Now, Mary being the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms the soul to our Lord is devotion to His holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more is it consecrated to Jesus. Hence it comes to pass, that the most perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing else but a perfect and entire consecration of ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, and this is the devotion which I teach; or in other words, a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy Baptism.

This devotion consists, then, in giving ourselves entirely and altogether to our Lady, in order to belong entirely and altogether to Jesus by her. We must give her (1) our body, with all its senses and its members; (2) our soul, with all its powers; (3) the exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future. In a word, we must give her all we have in the order of nature and in the order of grace, and all that may become ours in future in the orders of nature, grace, and glory; and this we must do without any reserve of so much as one farthing, one hair, or one least good action; and we must do it also for all eternity, and we must do it further without pretending to, or hoping for, any other recompense for our offering and service, except the honour of belonging to Jesus Christ by

Mary and in Mary, even though that sweet Mistress were not, as she always is, the most generous and the most grateful of creatures.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 24

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 152–164*

This devotion is an *easy, short, perfect, and secure* way of arriving at union with our Lord, in which the perfection of a Christian consists.

It is an *easy* way. It is the way which Jesus Christ Himself trod in coming to us, and in which there is no obstacle in arriving at Him. It is true that we can attain to divine union by other roads; but it is by many more crosses, and strange deaths, and with many more difficulties, which we shall find it hard to overcome.

This devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a *short* road to find Jesus Christ, both because it is a road which we do not stray from, and because, as I have just said, it is a road we tread with joy and facility, and by consequence with promptitude. We make more progress in a brief period of submission to, and dependence on, Mary than in whole years of our own will, and of resting upon ourselves.

This practice of devotion to our Blessed Lady is also a *perfect* path by which to go and unite ourselves to Jesus, because the divine Mary is the most perfect and the most holy of creatures, and because Jesus, who has come to us most perfectly, took no other road for His great and admirable journey. The Most High, the Incomprehensible, the Inaccessible, He Who Is, has deigned to come to us, little worms of earth who are nothing. How has He done this? The Most High has come down to us perfectly and divinely by the humble Mary. He has come to us by her, without losing anything of His divinity and sanctity. So it is by Mary that the unspeakably little are to ascend, perfectly and divinely, without any fear, to the Most High.

This devotion to our Blessed Lady is also a *secure* way to go to Jesus, and to acquire perfection by uniting us to Him.

It is a secure way, because the practice which I am teaching is not new.

Indeed, we cannot see how it could be condemned without overturning the foundations of Christianity. It is clear, then, that this devotion is not new; and that if it is not common, it is because it is too precious to be relished and practised by all the world.⁶

This devotion is a secure means of going to Jesus Christ, because it is the very characteristic of our Blessed Lady to conduct us surely to Jesus, just as it is the very characteristic of Jesus to conduct us surely to the Eternal Father.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 25

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 213–225*

Wonderful Effects of this Devotion

My dear brother, be sure that, if you are faithful to the interior and exterior practices of this devotion, which I will point out, the following effects will take place in your soul:

§ 1. By the light which the Holy Ghost will give you by His dear Spouse, Mary, you will understand your own evil, your corruption, and your incapacity for any thing good, which is not God's free gift to us, either as Author of nature or of grace. In other words, the humble Mary will communicate to you a portion of her profound humility, which will make you despise yourself, despise nobody else, but love to be despised yourself.

§ 2. Our Blessed Lady will give you also a portion of her faith, which was the greatest of all faiths that ever were on earth, greater than the faith of all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints put together.

§ 3. This Mother of fair love will take away from your heart all scruple and all disorder of servile fear.

§ 4. Our Blessed Lady will fill you with a great confidence in God and in herself, because you will not be approaching to Jesus by yourself. but always by that good Mother.

§ 5. The soul of our Blessed Lady will communicate itself to you, to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will enter into the place of yours, to rejoice in God her salvation, provided only that you are faithful to the practices of this devotion.

§ 6. If Mary, who is the tree of life, is well cultivated in our soul by fidelity to the practices of this devotion, she will bear her fruit in her own time, and her fruit is none other than Jesus Christ.

§ 7. By this practice, faithfully observed, you will give Jesus more glory in a month than by any other practice, however difficult, in many years.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

DAY 26

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 12–38*

If you wish to comprehend the Mother, says a Saint, comprehend the Son; for she is the worthy Mother of God. *Hic taceat omnis lingua*,—"Here let every tongue be mute."

It is with a particular joy that my heart has dictated what I have just written, in order to show that the divine Mary has been up to this time unknown, and that this is one of the reasons that Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be. If, then, as is certain, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to come into the world, it will be but a necessary consequence of the knowledge of the kingdom of the most holy Virgin Mary, who brought Him into the world the first time, and will make His second advent full of splendour.

I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being but a mere creature that has come from the hands of the Most High, is, in comparison with His Infinite Majesty, less than an atom; or rather she is nothing at all, because He only is "He who is," and thus by consequence that grand Lord, always independent and sufficient to Himself, never had, and has not now, any absolute need of the Holy Virgin for the accomplishment of His will and for the manifestation of His glory. He has but to will, in order to do everything.

Nevertheless I say that, things being supposed as they are now, God having willed to commence and to complete His greatest works by the most holy Virgin, since He created her, we may well think He will not change His conduct in the eternal ages; for He is God, and He changes not either in His sentiments or in His conduct.

Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace, as Jesus is the King of them by nature and by conquest. Now, as the kingdom of Jesus Christ consists principally in the heart and interior of a man,—according to that word, “The kingdom of God is within you,”—in like manner the kingdom of our Blessed Lady is principally in the interior of a man, that is to say, his soul; and it is principally in souls that she is more glorified with her Son than in all visible creatures, and that we can call her, as the Saints do, the Queen of hearts.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary \(Litany of Loreto\)](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort’s Prayer to Mary](#)

[Pray the Rosary](#)

WEEK THREE

OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

DURING this period we shall apply ourselves to the study of Jesus Christ. What is to be studied in Christ? First the God-Man, His grace and glory; then His rights to sovereign dominion over us; since, after having renounced Satan and the world, we have taken Jesus Christ for our Lord. What next shall be the object of our study? His exterior actions and also His interior life; namely, the virtues and acts of His Sacred Heart; His association with Mary in the mysteries of the Annunciation and Incarnation, during His infancy and hidden life, at the feast of Cana and on Calvary.

DAY 27

Today's Reading: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 61–62*

61. Jesus Christ our Saviour, true God and true Man, ought to be the last end of all our other devotions, else they are false and delusive. Jesus Christ is the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end of all things. We labour not, as the Apostle says, except to render every man perfect in Jesus Christ; because it is in Him alone that the whole plenitude of the Divinity dwells, together with all the other plenitudes of graces, virtues, and perfections; because it is in Him alone that we have been blessed with all spiritual benediction; and because He is our only Master, who has to teach us; our only Lord, on whom we ought to depend; our only Head, to whom we must belong; our only Model, to whom we should conform ourselves; our only Physician, who can heal us; our only Shepherd, who can feed us; our only Way, who can lead us; our only Truth, who can make us grow; our only Life, who can animate us; and our only All in all things, who can suffice us. There has been no other name given under heaven, except the name of Jesus, by which we can be saved. God has laid no other foundation of our salvation, of our perfection, and of our glory, except Jesus Christ. Every building which is not built upon that firm rock is founded upon the moving sand, and sooner or later will fall infallibly. By Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, we can do all things; we can render all honour and glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost; we can become perfect ourselves, and be to our neighbour a good odour of eternal life.

62. If, then, we establish the solid devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only to establish more perfectly the devotion to Jesus Christ, and to put forward an easy and secure means for finding Jesus Christ. If devotion to our Lady removed us from Jesus Christ, we should have to reject it as an illusion of the devil; but on the contrary, so far from this being the case, there is

nothing which makes devotion to our Lady more necessary for us, as I have already shown, and will show still further hereafter, than that it is the means of finding Jesus Christ perfectly, of loving Him tenderly, and of serving Him faithfully.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary](#)

DAY 28

Today's Reading: *Matthew 26:1, 26–29, 36–46*

¹And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended all these words, he said to his disciples: ²You know that after two days shall be the pasch, and the son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified . . .

. . . ²⁶And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. ²⁷And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. ²⁸For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins. ²⁹And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father . . .

. . . ³⁶Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani; and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. ³⁷And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. ³⁸Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with me. ³⁹And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. ⁴⁰And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me? ⁴¹Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak. ⁴²Again the second time, he went and prayed, saying: My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³And he cometh again and findeth them sleeping: for their eyes were

heavy. ⁴⁴And leaving them, he went again: and he prayed the third time, saying the selfsame word. ⁴⁵Then he cometh to his disciples, and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand that will betray me.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary.](#)

DAY 29

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 1*

Of the Imitation of Christ, and Contempt of all the Vanities of the World

He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness (John 8:12), saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished, how we ought to imitate His life and manners, if we would truly be enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chiefest endeavour be, to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of Christ exceedeth all the doctrine of holy men.; and he that hath the Spirit will find therein the hidden manna (Apocalypse. 2:17). But it falleth out that many who often hear the Gospel of Christ, feel little desire after it, because they have not the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). But Whosoever will fully and with relish understand the words of Christ, must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

What doth it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and art thereby displeasing to the Trinity? Surely profound words do not make a man holy and just; but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God. I had rather feel contrition, than know the definition thereof. If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would all that profit thee without the love of God (1 Cor. 13:2), and without His grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity (Eccles. 1:2), except to love God, and to serve Him only. This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world to press forward towards heavenly kingdoms.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary](#)

DAY 30

Today's Reading: *Matthew 27:36–44*

³⁶And they sat and watched him. ³⁷And they put over his head his cause written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁸Then were crucified with him two thieves: one on the right hand, and one on the left. ³⁹And they that passed by, blasphemed him, wagging their heads, ⁴⁰And saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. ⁴¹In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: ⁴²He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. ⁴³He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴And the selfsame thing the thieves also, that were crucified with him, reproached him with.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary](#)

DAY 31

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 4, Chapter 2*

That the Great Goodness and Love of God Is Exhibited to Man in This Sacrament

In confidence of Thy goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near, sick to the Healer, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, needy to the King of Heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to the Creator, desolate to my own tender Comforter. "But whence is this to me," that Thou comest unto me (Luke 1:43)? What am I, that Thou shouldest grant me Thine own self? how dare a sinner appear before Thee?

And how is it that Thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a sinner? Thou knowest Thy servant, and art well aware that he hath in him no good thing, for which Thou shouldest grant him this. I confess therefore mine own vileness, I acknowledge Thy goodness, I praise Thy tender mercy, and give Thee thanks for Thy transcendent love.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary.](#)

DAY 32

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 2, Chapter 7*

Of the Love of Jesus above All Things

Blessed is he that understandeth (Psalm 119:1,2) what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. Thou oughtest to leave thy beloved, for thy beloved (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Cant. 2:16); for that Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and persevering. He that cleaveth unto a creature, shall fall with that which is subject to fall; he that embraceth Jesus shall be made strong for ever.

Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end. Some time or other thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no. Keep close to Jesus both in life and in death, and commit thyself unto His faithfulness, who, when all fail, can alone help thee.

Thy Beloved is of that nature, that He will admit of no rival; but will have thy heart alone, and sit on His throne as King. If thou couldest empty thyself perfectly from all creatures, Jesus would willingly dwell with thee.

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 257–260

Besides the external practices of the devotion which we have been describing so far, and which we must not omit through negligence or contempt, so far as the state and condition of each one will allow him to

observe them, there are some very sanctifying interior practices for those whom the Holy Ghost calls to high perfection.

These may be expressed in four words: to do all our actions *by* Mary, *with* Mary, *in* Mary, and *for* Mary; so that we may do them all the more perfectly *by* Jesus, *with* Jesus, *in* Jesus, and *for* Jesus.

We must do our actions *by* Mary; that is to say, we must obey her in all things, and in all things conduct ourselves by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God,—*Qui spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei*. Those who are led by the spirit of Mary are the children of Mary, and consequently the children of God, as we have shown; and among so many clients of the Blessed Virgin, none are true or faithful but those who are led by her spirit. I have said that the spirit of Mary was the Spirit of God, because she was never led by her own spirit, but always by the Holy Ghost, who has rendered Himself so completely master of her, that He has become her own proper spirit. A soul is happy indeed, when, like the good Jesuit lay brother, Alphonso Rodriguez, who died in the odour of sanctity, it is all possessed and over-ruled by the spirit of Mary, a spirit meek and strong, zealous and prudent, humble and courageous, pure and profound.

We must do our actions *with* Mary. We must therefore in every action consider how Mary has done it, or how she would have done it, had she been in our place. For that end we must examine and meditate the great virtues which she practised during her life, and particularly, first of all, her lively faith, by which she believed without hesitation the Angel's word, and believed it faithfully and constantly up to the foot of the Cross. Her profound humility, which made her hide herself, hold her peace, submit to every thing, and put herself the last of all.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary.](#)

DAY 33

Today's Reading: *Imitation of Christ: Book 4, Chapter 11*

That the Blood of Christ and the Holy Scriptures Are Most Necessary unto a Faithful Soul

O most sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the pleasure of the devout soul that feasteth with Thee in Thy banquet; where there is set for her no other food to be eaten but Thyself, her only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of her heart! To me also it would be indeed sweet, in Thy presence to pour forth tears from the very bottom of my heart, and with the grateful Magdalene to wash Thy feet with tears (Luke 7:38). But where is that devotion? Where that bountiful flowing of holy tears? Surely in the sight of Thee and Thy holy Angels, my whole heart ought to burn, and to weep for joy. For in this Sacrament I have Thee mystically present, hidden under another shape. For to look upon Thee in Thine own Divine brightness, mine eyes would not be able to endure; nor could even the whole world stand in the splendor of the glory of Thy majesty. Herein then Thou hast regard to my weakness, that Thou dost hide Thyself under this Sacrament.

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Nos. 261–265

In Mary

We must do our actions *in* Mary. Thoroughly to understand this practice, we must know, first, that our Blessed Lady is the true terrestrial paradise of the new Adam, and that the ancient Paradise was but a figure of her. There are, then, in this earthly paradise, riches, beauties, rarities, and inexplicable sweetnesses, which Jesus Christ, the new Adam, has left there; it was in this

paradise that He took His complacency for nine months, worked His wonders, and displayed His riches with the magnificence of a God. It is in this earthly paradise that there is the true tree of life, which has borne Jesus Christ, the Fruit of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which has given light unto the world. There are in this divine place trees planted by the hand of God, and watered by His Divine unction, which have borne and daily bear fruits of a taste divine. It is but the Holy Ghost who can make us know the hidden truth of these figures of material things.

The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Father, also styles the Blessed Virgin the Eastern Gate, by which the High-Priest, Jesus Christ, enters the world and leaves it. By it He came the first time, and by it He will come the second.

Finally, we must do all our actions *for* Mary. As we have given ourselves up entirely to her service, it is but just to do every thing for her, as a servant and a slave. It is not that we can take her for the last end of our services, for that is Jesus Christ alone; but we may take her for our proximate end, our mysterious means, and our easy way to go to Him. Like a good servant and slave, we must not remain idle, but, supported by her protection, we must undertake and achieve great things for this august sovereign. We must defend her privileges when they are disputed; we must stand up for her glory when it is attacked; we must entice all the world, if we can, to her service and to this true and solid devotion; we must speak and cry out against those who abuse her devotion to outrage her Son, and we must at the same time establish this Veritable Devotion; we must pretend to no recompense for our little services, except the honour of belonging to so sweet a Queen, and the happiness of being united by her to Jesus her Son by an indissoluble tie in time and in eternity.

PRAYERS

[Litany of the Holy Ghost](#)

[Ave Maris Stella](#)

[Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)

[St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Jesus](#)

[O Jesus Living in Mary.](#)

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONSECRATION

AT THE END of three weeks, we should go to confession and Holy Communion with the intention of giving ourselves to Jesus Christ in the quality of slaves of love, by the hands of Mary. After Communion, we should recite the consecration prayer—we ought to write it, or have it written, and sign it the same day the consecration is made. It would be well that on this day, we should pay some tribute to Jesus Christ and our Blessed Lady, either as a penance for our past unfaithfulness to the vows of Baptism, or as a testimony of dependence on the dominion of Jesus and Mary. This tribute should be one in accordance with your fervour, such as a fast, mortification or alms, or a candle. If but a pin is given in homage, and given with a good heart, it will be enough for Jesus, Who loves only the good will. Once a year at least, and on the same day, we should renew this consecration, observing the same practices during the three weeks.

You should aim to do the consecration on a Marian Feast day, like the Immaculate Conception. Here is a list of prominent Marian Feast days:

January 1—Mary, Mother of God

January 8—Our Lady of Prompt Succor

February 2—Purification of the Virgin

February 11—Our Lady of Lourdes

March 25—Annunciation by Archangel Gabriel (it may be either moved to the day before Palm Sunday should this date be on Holy Week; or to the Monday after the second Sunday of Easter if this date falls on either Friday or Saturday of Holy Week or during Easter Week)

April 26—Our Lady of Good Counsel

May 1—Queen of Heaven

May 13—Our Lady of Fatima

May 24—Mary Help of Christians
May 31—Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces
May 31—Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
June 27—Our Lady of Perpetual Help
July 16—Our Lady of Mount Carmel
August 2—Our Lady of Angels
August 5—Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major
August 15—Assumption into Heaven
August 21—Our Lady of Knock
August 22—Queenship of Mary
August 22—Black Madonna of Częstochowa
September 8—Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 12—The Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 15—Our Lady of Sorrows
September 19—Our Lady of La Salette
September 24—Our Lady of Walsingham
October 7—Most Holy Rosary
November 16—Our Lady of Mercy
November 21—Presentation of Mary
December 8—Immaculate Conception
December 12—Our Lady of Guadalupe
1 day after Ascension of Jesus—Our Lady of Apostles
1 day after Pentecost—Our Lady of Holy Church
9 days after Corpus Christi—Immaculate Heart of Mary

CONSECRATION OF OURSELVES TO JESUS CHRIST, THE INCARNATE WISDOM, BY THE HANDS OF MARY

O Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom! O sweetest and most Adorable Jesus! True God and True Man, only Son of the Eternal Father, and of Mary always Virgin! I adore Thee profoundly in the bosom and splendours of Thy Father during eternity; and I adore Thee also in the Virginal bosom of Mary, Thy most worthy Mother, in the time of Thine Incarnation.

I give Thee thanks for that Thou hast annihilated Thyself, in taking the form of a slave, in order to rescue me from the cruel slavery of the devil. I praise and glorify Thee for that Thou hast been pleased to submit Thyself to Mary, Thy holy Mother, in all things, in order to make me Thy faithful slave through her. But, alas! ungrateful and faithless as I have been, I have not kept the promises which I made so solemnly to Thee in my Baptism; I have not fulfilled my obligations; I do not deserve to be called Thy son, nor yet Thy slave; and as there is nothing in me which does not merit Thine anger and Thy repulse, I dare no more come by myself before Thy Most Holy and August Majesty. It is on this account that I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me for a mediatrix with Thee. It is by her means that I hope to obtain of Thee contrition, and the pardon of my sins, the acquisition and the preservation of wisdom. I salute thee, then, O immaculate Mary, living tabernacle of the Divinity, where the Eternal Wisdom willed to be hidden, and to be adored by Angels and by men. I hail thee, O Queen of heaven and earth, to whose empire every thing is subject which is under God.

I salute thee, O sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails to no one. Hear the desires which I have of the Divine Wisdom; and for that end receive the

vows and offerings which my lowness presents to thee. I, N., a faithless sinner,—I renew and ratify to-day in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce for ever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

In the presence of all the heavenly court I choose thee this day for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present, and future; leaving to you the entire and full right of disposing of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, to the greatest glory of God, in time and in eternity.

Receive, O benignant Virgin, this little offering of my slavery, in the honour of, and in union with, that subjection which the Eternal Wisdom deigned to have to thy Maternity, in homage to the power which both of you have over this little worm and miserable sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity hath favoured thee. I protest that I wish henceforth, as thy true slave, to seek thy honour and to obey thee in all things.

O admirable Mother, present me to thy dear Son as His eternal slave, so that as He hath redeemed me by thee, by thee He may receive me. O Mother of mercy, get me the grace to obtain the true Wisdom of God; and for that end put me in the number of those whom thou lovest, whom thou teachest, whom thou conductest, and whom thou nourishest and protectest, as thy children and thy slaves.

O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator, and slave of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain, by thy intercession, and by thy example, to the fulness of His age on earth, and of His glory in the heavens. *Amen.*

Qui potest capere, capiat.
Let him take who can take.

Quis sapiens, et intelliget hæc?

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?



PRAYERS

VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
and in our souls take up Thy rest;
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

O comforter, to Thee we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
and sweet anointing from above.

Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;
Thou, finger of God's hand we own;
Thou, promise of the Father,
Thou Who dost the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our sense from above,
and make our hearts o'erflow with love;
with patience firm and virtue high
the weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,
and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,
turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow
the Father and the Son to know;
and Thee, through endless times confessed,
of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,
henceforth by all in earth and heaven. Amen.

AVE MARIS STELLA

Hail, O Star of the ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
ever sinless Virgin,
gate of heav'nly rest.

Taking that sweet Ave,
which from Gabriel came,
peace confirm within us,
changing Eve's name.

Break the sinners' fetters,
make our blindness day,
Chase all evils from us,
for all blessings pray.

Show thyself a Mother,
may the Word divine
born for us thine Infant
hear our prayers through thine.

Virgin all excelling,
mildest of the mild,
free from guilt preserve us
meek and undefiled.

Keep our life all spotless,
make our way secure
till we find in Jesus,
joy for evermore.

Praise to God the Father,
honor to the Son,
in the Holy Spirit,
be the glory one. Amen.

MAGNIFICAT

My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and Holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy: As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His seed for ever. Amen.

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

PRAY THE ROSARY

How to pray the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

A sign of the cross on the Crucifix and then the Apostles' Creed;

An Our Father on the first large bead;

A Hail Mary on each of the three small beads with the following intentions (the theological virtues):

For the increase of faith

For the increase of hope

For the increase of charity

A Glory Be to the Father;

Announce the mystery

An "Our Father" on the large bead

A "Hail Mary" on each of the adjacent ten small beads;

A "Glory Be to the Father";

(The Fatima Prayer is commonly added here, as a pious addition: "O My Jesus, Forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven. Especially those most in need of thy mercy.")

Announce the next mystery, again an Our Father on the next large bead, followed by ten Hail Marys on the small beads, the Glory Be to the Father,

(and Fatima Prayer) for each of the following decades;

In conclusion, Hail Holy Queen and a sign of the cross.

LITANY OF THE HOLY GHOST

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Father all powerful, have mercy on us
Jesus, Eternal Son of the Father, Redeemer of the world, save us.
Spirit of the Father and the Son, boundless life of both, sanctify us.
Holy Trinity, hear us.

Holy Ghost, Who proceedest from the Father and the Son, enter our hearts.
Holy Ghost, Who art equal to the Father and the Son, enter our hearts.

Promise of God the Father, have mercy on us.
Ray of heavenly light, have mercy on us.
Author of all good, have mercy on us.
Source of heavenly water, have mercy on us.
Consuming fire, have mercy on us.
Ardent charity, have mercy on us.
Spiritual unction, have mercy on us.
Spirit of love and truth, have mercy on us.
Spirit of wisdom and understanding, have mercy on us.
Spirit of counsel and fortitude, have mercy on us.
Spirit of knowledge and piety, have mercy on us.
Spirit of the fear of the Lord, have mercy on us.
Spirit of grace and prayer, have mercy on us.
Spirit of peace and meekness, have mercy on us.
Spirit of modesty and innocence, have mercy on us.

Holy Ghost, the Comforter, have mercy on us.

Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, have mercy on us.
Holy Ghost, Who governest the Church, have mercy on us.
Gift of God, the Most High, have mercy on us.
Spirit Who fillest the universe, have mercy on us.
Spirit of the adoption of the children of God, have mercy on us.

Holy Ghost, inspire us with horror of sin.
Holy Ghost, come and renew the face of the earth.
Holy Ghost, shed Thy light in our souls.
Holy Ghost, engrave Thy law in our hearts.
Holy Ghost, inflame us with the flame of Thy love.
Holy Ghost, open to us the treasures of Thy graces.
Holy Ghost, teach us to pray well.
Holy Ghost, enlighten us with Thy heavenly inspirations.
Holy Ghost, lead us in the way of salvation.
Holy Ghost, grant us the only necessary knowledge.
Holy Ghost, inspire in us the practice of good. Holy Ghost, grant us the merits of all virtues.
Holy Ghost, make us persevere in justice.
Holy Ghost, be Thou our everlasting reward.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Send us Thy Holy Ghost.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, pour down into our souls the gifts of the Holy Ghost.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and piety.

V. Come, Holy Ghost! Fill the hearts of Thy faithful,
R. And enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

Let Us Pray. Grant, O merciful Father, that Thy Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify us, that He may penetrate us with His heavenly dew and make us fruitful in good works, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, liveth and reigneth forever and ever.

R. Amen.

LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (LITANY OF LORETO)

Lord, have mercy on us,
Christ have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.
Holy Mother of God, pray for us.
Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us.
Mother of Christ, pray for us.
Mother of divine grace, pray for us.
Mother most pure, pray for us.
Mother most chaste, pray for us.
Mother inviolate, pray for us.
Mother undefiled, pray for us.
Mother most amiable, pray for us.
Mother most admirable, pray for us.
Mother of good counsel, pray for us.
Mother of our Creator, pray for us.
Mother of our Saviour, pray for us.
Mother of the Church, pray for us.
Virgin most prudent, pray for us.

Virgin most venerable, pray for us.
Virgin most renowned, pray for us.
Virgin most powerful, pray for us.
Virgin most merciful, pray for us.
Virgin most faithful, pray for us.
Preparation for Consecration, pray for us.
Mirror of justice, pray for us.
Seat of wisdom, pray for us.
Cause of our joy, pray for us.
Vessel of honor, pray for us.
Singular vessel of devotion, pray for us.
Mystical rose, pray for us.
Tower of David, pray for us.
Tower of ivory, pray for us.
House of gold, pray for us.
Ark of the covenant, pray for us.
Gate of Heaven, pray for us.
Morning star, pray for us.
Health of the sick, pray for us.
Refuge of sinners, pray for us.
Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us.
Help of Christians, pray for us.
Queen of angels, pray for us.
Queen of patriarchs, pray for us.
Queen of prophets, pray for us.
Queen of Apostles, pray for us.
Queen of martyrs, pray for us.
Queen of confessors, pray for us.
Queen of virgins, pray for us.
Queen of all saints, pray for us.
Queen conceived without Original Sin, pray for us.
Queen assumed into Heaven, pray for us.
Queen of the most holy Rosary, pray for us.
Queen of peace, pray for us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray. Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, unto us Thy servants, that we may rejoice in continual health of mind and body, and by the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary, ever virgin, may be delivered from present sadness, and enter into the joy of Thine eternal gladness. Through Christ Our Lord.

R. Amen

LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Jesus, hear us.

Jesus, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, splendor of the Father, have mercy on us.

Jesus, brightness of eternal light, have mercy on us.

Jesus, King of glory, have mercy on us.

Jesus, sun of justice, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most amiable, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most admirable, have mercy on us.

Jesus, mighty God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Father of the world to come, have mercy on us.

Jesus, angel of great counsel, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most powerful, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most patient, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most obedient, have mercy on us.

Jesus, meek and humble, have mercy on us.

Jesus, lover of chastity, have mercy on us.

Jesus, lover of us, have mercy on us.

Jesus, God of peace, have mercy on us.

Jesus, author of life, have mercy on us.

Jesus, model of virtues, have mercy on us.

Jesus, lover of souls, have mercy on us.
Jesus, our God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, our refuge, have mercy on us.
Jesus, Father of the poor, have mercy on us.
Jesus, treasure of the faithful, have mercy on us.
Jesus, Good Shepherd, have mercy on us.
Jesus, true light, have mercy on us.
Jesus, eternal wisdom, have mercy on us.
Jesus, infinite goodness, have mercy on us.
Jesus, our way and our life, have mercy on us.
Jesus, joy of angels, have mercy on us.
Jesus, King of patriarchs, have mercy on us.
Jesus, master of Apostles, have mercy on us.
Jesus, teacher of Evangelists, have mercy on us.
Jesus, strength of martyrs, have mercy on us.
Jesus, light of confessors, have mercy on us.
Jesus, purity of virgins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, crown of all saints, have mercy on us.

Be merciful, spare us, O Jesus.
Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Jesus.

From all evil, Jesus, deliver us.
From all sin, Jesus, deliver us.
From Thy wrath, Jesus, deliver us.
From the snares of the devil, Jesus, deliver us.
From the spirit of fornication, Jesus, deliver us.
From everlasting death, Jesus, deliver us.
From the neglect of Thine inspirations, Jesus, deliver us.

Through the mystery of Thy holy Incarnation, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy nativity, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thine infancy, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy most divine life, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy labors, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thine agony and Passion, Jesus, deliver us.

Through Thy cross and dereliction, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy sufferings, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy death and burial, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy Resurrection, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thine Ascension, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thine institution of the most Holy Eucharist, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy joys, Jesus, deliver us.
Through Thy glory, Jesus, deliver us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Jesus.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Jesus.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Jesus, hear us,
Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let Us Pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast said: Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; grant, we beseech Thee, to us who ask the gift of Thy divine love, that we may ever love Thee with all our hearts, and in all our words and actions, and never cease from praising Thee.

Give us, O Lord, a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy Name; for Thou never failest to govern those whom Thou dost solidly establish in Thy love, Who livest and reignest world without end.

R. Amen.

ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT'S PRAYER TO MARY

Hail Mary, beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father! Hail Mary, admirable Mother of the Son! Hail Mary, faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost! Hail Mary, my dear Mother, my loving Mistress, my powerful sovereign! Hail my joy, my glory, my heart and my soul! Thou art all mine by mercy, and I am all thine by justice. But I am not yet sufficiently thine. I now give myself wholly to thee without keeping anything back for myself or others. If thou still seest in me anything which does not belong to thee, I beseech thee to take it and to make thyself the absolute Mistress of all that is mine. Destroy in me all that may be displeasing to God, root it up and bring it to nought; place and cultivate in me everything that is pleasing to thee.

May the light of thy faith dispel the darkness of my mind; may thy profound humility take the place of my pride; may thy sublime contemplation check the distractions of my wandering imagination; may thy continuous sight of God fill my memory with His presence; may the burning love of thy heart inflame the lukewarmness of mine; may thy virtues take the place of my sins; may thy merits be my only adornment in the sight of God and make up for all that is wanting in me. Finally, dearly beloved Mother, grant, if it be possible, that I may have no other spirit but thine to know Jesus and His divine will; that I may have no other soul but thine to praise and glorify the Lord; that I may have no other heart but thine to love God with a love as pure and ardent as thine I do not ask thee for visions, revelations, sensible devotion or spiritual pleasures. It is thy privilege to see God clearly; it is thy privilege to enjoy heavenly bliss; it is thy privilege to triumph gloriously in Heaven at the right hand of thy Son and to hold absolute sway over angels, men and demons; it is thy privilege to dispose of all the gifts of God, just as thou wilt.

Such is, O heavenly Mary, the “best part,” which the Lord has given thee and which shall never be taken away from thee-and this thought fills my heart with joy. As for my part here below, I wish for no other than that which was thine: to believe sincerely without spiritual pleasures; to suffer joyfully without human consolation; to die continually to myself without respite; and to work zealously and unselfishly for thee until death as the humblest of thy servants. The only grace I beg thee to obtain for me is that every day and every moment of my life I may say: Amen, so be it’s all that thou didst do while on earth; Amen, so be it’s all that thou art now doing in Heaven; Amen, so be it-to all that thou art doing in my soul, so that thou alone mayest fully glorify Jesus in me for time and eternity. Amen.

ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT'S PRAYER TO JESUS

O most loving Jesus, deign to let me pour forth my gratitude before Thee, for the grace Thou hast bestowed upon me in giving me to Thy holy Mother through the devotion of Holy Bondage, that she may be my advocate in the presence of Thy majesty and my support in my extreme misery. Alas, O Lord! I am so wretched that without this dear Mother I should be certainly lost. Yes, Mary is necessary for me at Thy side and everywhere: that she may appease Thy just wrath, because I have so often offended Thee; that she may save me from the eternal punishment of Thy justice, which I deserve; that she may contemplate Thee, speak to Thee, pray to Thee, approach Thee and please Thee; that she may help me to save my soul and the souls of others; in short, Mary is necessary for me that I may always do Thy holy will and seek Thy greater glory in all things. Ah, would that I could proclaim throughout the whole world the mercy that Thou hast shown to me! Would that everyone might know I should be already damned, were it not for Mary! Would that I might offer worthy thanksgiving for so great a blessing! Mary is in me. Oh, what a treasure! Oh, what a consolation! And shall I not be entirely hers'? Oh, what ingratitude! My dear Saviour, send me death rather than such a calamity, for I would rather die than live without belonging entirely to Mary. With St. John the Evangelist at the foot of the Cross, I have taken her a thousand times for my own and as many times have given myself to her; but if I have not yet done it as Thou, dear Jesus, dost wish, I now renew this offering as Thou dost desire me to renew it. And if Thou seest in my soul or my body anything that does not belong to this august princess, I pray Thee to take it and cast it far from me, for whatever in me does not belong to Mary is unworthy of Thee. O Holy Spirit, grant me all these graces. Plant in my soul the Tree of true Life, which is Mary; cultivate it and tend it so that it may grow and blossom and

bring forth the fruit of life in abundance. O Holy Spirit, give me great devotion to Mary, Thy faithful spouse; give me great confidence in her maternal heart and an abiding refuge in her mercy, so that by her Thou mayest truly form in me Jesus Christ, great and mighty, unto the fullness of His perfect age. Amen.

O JESUS LIVING IN MARY

O Jesus living in Mary,
Come and live in Thy servants,
In the spirit of Thy holiness,
In the fullness of Thy might,
In the truth of Thy virtues,
In the perfection of Thy ways,
In the communion of Thy mysteries;
Subdue every hostile power
In Thy spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen.

THE SECRET OF MARY

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

Copyright © 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing.
All rights reserved.

Copyright © 1947 by Montfort Publications, Bay Shore, N.Y., US.
Retypeset and republished in 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing. Cover design by Catholic Way
Publishing.

A larger treatise, “True Devotion to Mary: With Preparation for Total Consecration,” is available
from the Publisher.

The “33 Day Preparation for Total Consecration” in this Collection is present in the book “True
Devotion to Mary: With Preparation for Total Consecration”; therefore it is omitted from this book in
this Collection. The E-Book and Paperback versions of the book; “The Secret of Mary: With
Preparation for Total Consecration” do include the “33 Day Preparation for Total Consecration”
material.

This work is published for the greater Glory of Jesus Christ through His most Holy Mother Mary and
for the sanctification of the militant Church and her members.

The typography of this book is the property of Catholic Way Publishing and may not be reproduced,
in whole or in part, without written permission of the Publisher.

Catholic Way Publishing® and the associated logo are registered Trademarks of the Catholic Way
Publishing Company.

Available in Paperback.

CONTENTS

INDEX

THE SECRET OF MARY

CONTENTS

PART I

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION

THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFYING OURSELVES

OUR SANCTIFICATION THROUGH MARY, A NECESSARY MEANS

OUR SANCTIFICATION BY THE PERFECT DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SLAVERY OF LOVE

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THIS DEVOTION

EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

INTERIOR PRACTICE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

EXTERIOR PRACTICES OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

THE TREE OF LIFE: ITS CULTURE AND GROWTH

OR

HOW TO MAKE MARY LIVE AND REIGN IN OUR SOULS

LITTLE CROWN OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

PART III

THE CONFRATERNITY OF MARY, QUEEN OF ALL HEARTS

PART I

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY

“Mary is the admirable echo of God. When we say, ‘Mary,’ she answers, ‘God.’ When, with St. Elizabeth, we call her ‘Blessed,’ she glorifies God.”—St. Louis De Montfort

INTRODUCTION

A SECRET OF SANCTITY

CONDITIONS

1. Predestinate soul, here is a secret the Most High has taught me, which I have not been able to find in any book, old or new.⁷ I confide it to you, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, on condition:

That you communicate it only to those who deserve it by their prayers, their alms-deeds and mortifications, by the persecutions they suffer, by their detachment from the world and their zeal for the salvation of souls.⁸

That you make use of it for your personal sanctification and salvation, for this secret works its effect in a soul only in proportion to the use made of it. beware, then, of remaining inactive while possessing my secret; it would turn into a poison and be your condemnation.⁹

That you thank God all the days of your life for the grace He has given you to know a secret you do not deserve to know. As you go on making use of this secret in the ordinary actions of your life, you will comprehend its value and its excellence, which at first you will not fully understand because of your many and grievous sins and because of your secret attachment to self.¹⁰

2. Before you read any further, lest you should be carried away by a too eager and natural desire to know this truth, kneel down and say devoutly the Ave Maris Stella¹¹ and the Veni Creator,¹² in order to understand and appreciate this Divine mystery.¹³

As I have not much time for writing, nor you for reading, I shall say everything as briefly as possible.

THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFYING OURSELVES

THE WILL OF GOD

3. Faithful soul, living image of God, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, it is the will of God that you be holy like Him in this life and glorious like Him in the next. Your sure vocation is the acquisition of the holiness of God, and unless all your thoughts and words and actions, all the sufferings and events of your life tend to that end, you are resisting God by not doing that for which He has created you and is now preserving you.¹⁴ Oh, what an admirable work! To change that which is dust into light, to make pure that which is unclean, holy that which is sinful, to make the creature like its Creator, man like God! Admirable work, I repeat, but difficult in itself, and impossible to mere nature; only God by His grace, by His abundant and extraordinary grace, can accomplish it. Even the creation of the whole world is not so great a masterpiece as this.

MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

4. Predestinate soul, how are you to do it? What means will you choose to reach the height to which God calls you? The means of salvation and sanctification are known to all; they are laid down in the Gospel, explained by the masters of the spiritual life, practiced by the Saints, and necessary to all who wish to be saved and to attain perfection. They are humility of heart, continual prayer, mortification in all things, abandonment to Divine Providence and conformity to the will of God.

5. To practice all these means of salvation and sanctification, the grace of God is absolutely necessary. No one can doubt that God gives His grace to all, in a more or less abundant measure. I say in a more or less abundant

measure, for God, although infinitely good, does not give equal grace to all, yet to each soul He gives sufficient grace.

The faithful soul will, with great grace, perform a great action, and with less grace a lesser action. It is the value and the excellence of the grace bestowed by God and corresponded to by the soul that gives to our actions their value and their excellence. These principles are certain.

AN EASY MEANS

6. It all comes to this, then: that you should find an easy means for obtaining from God the grace necessary to make you holy; and this means I wish to make known to you. Now, I say that to find this grace of God, *we must find Mary.*^{[15](#)}

OUR SANCTIFICATION THROUGH MARY, A NECESSARY MEANS¹⁶

MARY ALONE HAS FOUND GRACE WITH GOD

7. Mary alone has found grace with God, both for herself and for every man in particular. The patriarchs and prophets and all the Saints of the Old Law were not able to find that grace.

MOTHER OF GRACE

8. Mary gave being and life to the Author of all grace, and that is why she is called the Mother of Grace.

MARY HAS RECEIVED THE PLENITUDE OF GRACE

9. God the Father, from Whom every perfect gift and all grace come, as from its essential source, has given all graces to Mary by giving her His Son, so that, as St. Bernard says, “With His Son and in Him, God has given His Will to Mary.”

UNIVERSAL TREASURER OF GOD’S GRACES

10. God has entrusted Mary with the keeping, the administration and distribution of all His graces, so that all His graces and gifts pass through her hands; and , as St. Bernardine teaches, Mary gives to whom she wills, the way she wills, when she wills and as much as she wills, the graces of the Eternal Father, the virtues of Jesus Christ and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

MOTHER OF GOD’S CHILDREN

11. As in the order of nature a child must have a father and a mother, so likewise in the order of grace, a true child of the Church must have God for his Father and Mary for his Mother; and if anyone should glory in having God for his Father and yet has not the love of a true child for Mary, he is a deceiver, and the only father he has is the devil.

MARY FORMS THE MEMBERS OF JESUS

12. Since Mary has formed Jesus Christ, the Head of the elect, it is also her office to form the members of that Head, that is to say, all true Christians; for a mother does not form the head without the members, nor the members without the head. Whoever, therefore, wishes to be a member of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, must be formed in Mary by means of the grace of Jesus Christ, which she possesses in its fullness, in order to communicate it fully to her children, the true members of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

THROUGH HER THE HOLY GHOST PRODUCES THE ELECT

13. As the Holy Ghost has espoused Mary and has produced in her, by her and from her, His masterpiece, Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, and has never repudiated His spouse, so He now continues to produce the elect, in her and by her, in a mysterious but real manner.

MARY NOURISHES SOULS AND GIVES THEM GROWTH IN GOD

14. Mary has received a special office and power over our souls in order to nourish them and give them growth in God. St. Augustine even says that, during their present life, all the elect are hidden in Mary's womb and that they are not truly born until the Blessed Mother brings them forth to life eternal. Consequently, just as the child draws all its nourishment from the mother, who gives it in proportion to the child's weakness, in like manner do the elect draw all their spiritual nourishment and strength from Mary.

MARY DWELLS IN THE ELECT

15. It is to Mary that God the Father said: "My daughter, let thy dwelling be in Jacob," that is, in My elect, prefigured by Jacob. It is to Mary that God

the Son said: “My dear Mother, in Israel is thine inheritance,” that is, in the elect. And it is to Mary that the Holy Ghost said: “Take root, My faithful spouse, in My elect.” Whoever, then, is elect and predestinate has the Blessed Virgin with him, dwelling in his soul,¹⁸ and he will allow her to plant there the roots of profound humility, of ardent charity and of every virtue.

MARY FORMS JESUS IN US A LIVING MOLD OF GOD

16. St. Augustine calls Mary the living “mold of God,” and that indeed she is; for it was in her alone that God was made a true man without losing any feature of the Godhead, and it is also in her alone that man can be truly formed Into God, in so far as that is possible for human nature, by the grace of Jesus Christ.

A sculptor has two ways of making a lifelike statue or figure: He may carve the figure out of some hard, shapeless material, using for this purpose his professional skill and knowledge, his strength and the necessary instruments, or he may cast it in a mold. The first manner is long and difficult and subject to many mishaps; a single blow of the hammer or the chisel, awkwardly given, may spoil the whole work. The second is short, easy and smooth; it requires but little work and slight expense, provided the mold be perfect and made to reproduce the figure exactly; provided, moreover, the material used offer no resistance to the hand of the artist.¹⁹

A PERFECT MOLD

17. Mary is the great mold of God, made by the Holy Ghost to form a true God-Man by the Hypostatic Union and to form also a man-God by grace. In that mold none of the features of the Godhead is wanting. Whoever is cast in it, and allows himself to be molded, receives all the features of Jesus Christ, true God. The work is done gently, in a manner proportioned to human weakness, without much pain or labor, in a sure manner, free from all illusion, for where Mary is the devil has never had and never will have access; finally, it is done in a holy and spotless manner, without a shadow of the least stain of sin.

WELL-MOLTEN SOULS

18. Oh what a difference between a soul which has been formed in Christ by the ordinary ways of those who, like the sculptor, trust in their own skill 'and ingenuity, and a soul thoroughly tractable, entirely detached and well-molten, which, without trusting to its own skill, casts itself into Mary, there to be molded by the Holy Ghost. How many stains and defects and illusions, how much darkness and how much human nature is there in the former; and oh how pure, how Heavenly and how Christlike is the latter!

PARADISE AND WORLD OF GOD

19. There does not exist and never will exist a creature in whom God, either within or without Himself, is so highly exalted as He is in the most Blessed Virgin Mary, not excepting the Saints or the Cherubim or the highest Seraphim in Paradise. Mary is the paradise of God and His unspeakable world, into which the Son of God has come to work His wonders, to watch over it and to take His delight in it. God has made a world for wayfaring man, which is that world in which we dwell; He has made one for man in his glorified state, which is Heaven; and He has made one for Himself, which He has called Mary. It is a world unknown to most mortals here below and incomprehensible even to the Angels and Blessed in Heaven above, who, seeing God so highly exalted above them all and so deeply hidden in Mary, His world, are filled with admiration and unceasingly exclaim: "Holy, Holy, Holy."

GOD ALONE IN HER

20. Happy, a thousand times happy, is the soul here below to which the Holy Ghost reveals the Secret of Mary in order that it may come to know her; to which He opens the "Garden Enclosed", that it may enter into it; to which He gives access to that "Fountain Sealed," that it may draw from it and drink deep draughts of the living waters of grace! That soul will find God alone in His most amiable creature. It will find God infinitely holy and exalted, yet at the same time adapting Himself to its own weakness. Since God is present everywhere, He may be found everywhere, even in Hell, but nowhere do we creatures find Him nearer to us and more adapted to our

weakness than in Mary, since it was for that end that He came and dwelt in her. Everywhere else He is the Bread of the strong, the Bread of the Angels, but in Mary He is the Bread of children.²⁰

NO HINDRANCE TO OUR UNION WITH GOD

21. Let us not imagine, then, as some do who are misled by erroneous teachings, that Mary, being a creature, is a hindrance to our union with the Creator. It is no longer Mary who lives, it is Jesus Christ, it is God alone who lives in her. Her transformation into God surpasses that of St. Paul and of the other Saints more than the heavens surpass the earth by their height. Mary is made for God alone, and far from ever detaining a soul in herself, she casts the soul upon God and unites it with Him so much the more perfectly as the soul is more perfectly united to her. Mary is the admirable echo of God. When we say, “Mary,” she answers, “God.” When, with St. Elizabeth, we call her “Blessed,” she glorifies God. If the falsely enlightened, whom the devil has so miserably disillusioned, even in prayer, had known how to find Mary, and through her to find Jesus, and through Jesus, God the Father, they would not have had such terrible falls. The Saints tell us that when we have once found Mary, and through Mary, Jesus, and through Jesus, God the Father, we have found all good. He who says all excepts nothing: all grace and all friendship with God, all safety from God’s enemies, all truth to crush falsehoods, all facility to overcome difficulties in the way of salvation, all comfort and all joy amidst the bitterness of life.

SHE IMPARTS THE GRACE TO CARRY CROSSES

22. This does not mean that he who has found Mary by a true devotion will be exempt from crosses and sufferings.²¹ Far from it; he is more besieged by them than others are, because Mary, the Mother of the living, gives to all her children portions of the Tree of Life, which is the Cross of Jesus. But along with their crosses she also imparts the grace to carry them patiently and even cheerfully; and thus it is that the crosses which she lays upon those who belong to her are rather steeped in sweetness than filled with bitterness. If for a while her children feel the bitterness of the cup which one must needs drink in order to be the friend of God, the consolation and

joy which this good Mother sends after the trial encourage them exceedingly to carry still heavier and more painful crosses.

CONCLUSION

23. The difficulty, then, is to find really and truly the most Blessed Virgin Mary in order to find all abundant grace. God, being the absolute Master, can confer directly by Himself that which He usually grants only through Mary. It would even be rash to deny that sometimes He does so.

Nevertheless, St. Thomas teaches that in the order of grace, established by Divine Wisdom, God ordinarily communicates Himself to men only through Mary. Therefore, if we would go up to Him and be united with Him, we must use the same means He used to come down to us, to be made man and to impart His graces to us. That means is a true devotion to our Blessed Lady.

OUR SANCTIFICATION BY THE PERFECT DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SLAVERY OF LOVE

24. There are several true devotions to Our Lady: here I do not speak of those that are false.

1. DEVOTION WITHOUT SPECIAL PRACTICES

25. The first consists in fulfilling our Christian duties, avoiding mortal sin, acting more out of love than fear, praying to Our Lady now and then, honoring her as the Mother of God, yet without having any special devotion to her.

2. DEVOTION WITH SPECIAL PRACTICES

26. The second consists in entertaining for Our Lady more perfect feelings of esteem and love, of confidence and veneration. It leads us to join the Confraternities of the Holy Rosary and of the Scapular, to recite the five decades or the fifteen decades of the Rosary, to honor Mary's images and altars, to publish her praises and to enroll ourselves in her sodalities.²² This devotion is good, holy and praiseworthy, if we keep ourselves free from sin; but it is not so perfect as the next, nor so efficient in severing our soul from creatures or in detaching us from ourselves, in order to be united with Jesus Christ.

3. THE PERFECT DEVOTION: THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

27. The third devotion to Our Lady, known and practiced by very few persons, is the one I am now about to disclose to you, predestinate soul.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THIS DEVOTION

NATURE

28. It consists in giving oneself entirely and as a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through Mary; and after that to do all that we do, with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary.²³ I shall now explain these words.

SCOPE: TOTAL SURRENDER

29. We should choose a special feast-day on which to give, consecrate and sacrifice to Mary voluntarily, lovingly and without constraint, entirely and without reserve: our body and soul, our exterior property, such as house, family and income; and also our interior and spiritual possessions; namely, our merits, graces, virtues and satisfactions.²⁴

It should be observed here that by this devotion the soul sacrifices to Jesus, through Mary, all that it holds most dear, things of which even no religious order would require the sacrifice; namely, the right to dispose of ourselves, of the value of our prayers and alms, of our mortifications and satisfactions. The soul leaves everything to be freely disposed of by Our Lady so that she may apply it all according to her own will for the greater glory of God, which she alone knows perfectly.

SURRENDER OF THE VALUE OF OUR GOOD WORKS

30. We leave to her disposal all the satisfactory and impetratory value of our good works, so that after we have made the sacrifice of them—although not by vow—we are no longer the masters of any good works we may do;

but Our Lady may apply them, sometimes for the relief or the deliverance of a soul in Purgatory, sometimes for the conversion of a poor sinner, etc.²⁵

31. By this devotion we also place our merits in the hands of Our Lady, but only that she may preserve, augment and embellish them, because we cannot communicate to one another either the merits of sanctifying grace or those of glory. However, we give her all our prayers and good works, inasmuch as they have an impetratory and satisfactory value, that she may distribute and apply them to whom she pleases. If, after having thus consecrated ourselves to Our Lady, we desire to relieve a Soul in Purgatory, to save a sinner, or to assist a friend by our prayers, our alms-deeds, our mortifications and sacrifices, we must humbly ask it of Our Lady, abiding, however, by her decision, which remains unknown to us; and we must be fully persuaded that the value of our actions, being dispensed by the same hand which God Himself makes use of to distribute to us His graces and gifts, cannot fail to be applied for His greater glory.

THREE KINDS OF SLAVERY

32. I have said that this devotion consists in giving ourselves to Mary as slaves.²⁶ But notice that there are three kinds of slavery. The first is the slavery of nature; in this sense all men, good and bad alike, are slaves of God. The second is the slavery of constraint; the devils and the damned are slaves of God in this second sense. The third is the slavery of love and of free will; and this is the one by which we must consecrate ourselves to God through Mary. It is the most perfect way for us human creatures to give ourselves to God our Creator.

SERVANT AND SLAVE

33. Notice again, that there is a great difference between a servant and a slave. A servant claims wages for his services; a slave has a right to none. A servant is free to leave his master when he likes—he serves him only for a time; a slave belongs to his master for life and has no right to leave him. A servant does not give to his master the right of life and death over him; a slave gives himself up entirely, so that his master can put him to death

without being molested by the law. It is easily seen, then, that he who is a slave by constraint is rigorously dependent on his master. Strictly speaking, a man must be dependent in that sense only on his Creator. Hence, we do not find that kind of slavery among Christians, but only among pagans.

HAPPINESS OF THE SLAVE OF LOVE

34. But happy and a thousand times happy is the generous soul that consecrates itself entirely to Jesus through Mary as a slave of love after it has shaken off by Baptism the tyrannical slavery of the devil!

EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

I should require much supernatural light to describe perfectly the excellence of this practice.

I shall content myself with these few remarks.

IMITATION OF THE TRINITY

35. To give ourselves to Jesus through Mary is to imitate God the Father, Who has given us His Son only through Mary, and Who communicates to us His grace only through Mary. It is to imitate God the Son, Who has come to us only through Mary, and Who, “by giving us an example, that as He has done, so we do also” , has urged us to go to Him by the same means by which He has come to us—that is, through Mary. It is to imitate the Holy Ghost, Who bestows His graces and gifts upon us only through Mary. “Is it not fitting,” asks St. Bernard, “that grace should return to its Author by the same channel which conveyed it to us?”

IT HONORS JESUS

36. To go to Jesus through Mary is truly to honor Jesus Christ, for it denotes that we do not esteem ourselves worthy of approaching His infinite holiness directly and by ourselves because of our sins; that we need Mary, His holy Mother, to be our advocate and Mediatrix with Him, our Mediator. It is to approach Jesus as our Mediator and Brother, and at the same time to humble ourselves before Him, as before our God and our Judge. In a word, it is to practice humility, which is always exceedingly pleasing to the heart of God.

IT PURIFIES AND EMBELLISHES OUR GOOD WORKS

37. To consecrate ourselves thus to Jesus through Mary is to place in Mary's hands our good actions, which although they may appear to us to be good, are often very imperfect and unworthy of the sight and the acceptance of God, before whom even the stars are not pure. Ah! Let us pray, then, to our dear Mother and Queen, that having received our poor present, she may purify it, sanctify it, embellish it and thus render it worthy of God. All that our soul possesses is of less value before God, the Heavenly Householder, when it comes to winning His friendship and favor, than a worm-eaten apple presented to the king by a poor farmer in payment of the rent of his farm. But what would such a farmer do if he were wise and if he were well liked by the queen? Would he not give his apple to the queen? And would she not out of kindness to the poor man, as also out of respect for the king, remove from the apple all that is worm-eaten or spoiled, and then place it in a gold dish and surround it with flowers? Would the king refuse to accept the apple then? Or would he not rather receive it with joy from the hands of the queen, who favors that poor man? "If you wish to present something to God, no matter how small it may be," says St. Bernard, "place it in Mary's hands, if you do not wish to be refused."

38. Great God, how insignificant everything that we do really is! But let us place all in Mary's hands by this devotion. When we have given ourselves to Mary to the very utmost of our power, by despoiling ourselves completely in her honor, she will far outdo us in generosity and will repay us a hundredfold. She will communicate herself to us, with her merits and virtues; she will place our presents on the golden plate of her charity; she will clothe us, as Rebecca clothed Jacob, with the beautiful garments of her elder and only Son, Jesus Christ—that is, with His merits, which she has at her disposal; and thus, after we have despoiled ourselves of everything in her honor, we shall be "clothed in double garments"; that is, the garments, the ornaments, the perfumes, the merits and the virtues of Jesus and Mary clothe the soul of their slave, who has despoiled himself and who perseveres in his despoliation.²⁷

CHARITY IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE

39. Moreover, to give ourselves thus to Our Lady is to practice charity towards our neighbor in the highest possible degree, because we give her all that we hold most dear and let her dispose of it at her will in favor of the living and the dead.

IT INCREASES THE GRACE OF GOD IN US

40. By this devotion we place our graces, merits and virtues in safety, for we make Mary the depository of them all, saying to her: “See, my dear Mother, here are the good works that I have been able to do through the grace of thy dear Son; I am not able to keep them on account of my own weakness and inconstancy, and also because of the many wicked enemies who attack me day and night. Alas! One may see every day the cedars of Lebanon fall into the mire and the eagles, which had raised themselves to the sun, become birds of night; and so do a thousand of the just fall on my left hand and ten thousand on my right. But thou, my most powerful princess, sustain me lest I fall; keep all my possessions for fear I may be robbed of them. All I have I entrust to thee. I know well who thou art; therefore, I entrust myself entirely to thee; thou art faithful to God and to men; thou wilt not allow anything to perish that I entrust to thee; thou art powerful, and nothing can hurt thee nor rob thee of anything thou holdest in thy hands.”²⁸ “When you follow Mary, you will not go astray; when you pray to her, you will not despair; when you think of her, you will not err; when she sustains you, you will not fall; when she protects you, you will not fear; when she leads you, you will not become tired; when she favors you, you will arrive safely.”²⁹ And again: “She keeps her Son from striking us; she keeps the devil from hurting us; she keeps our virtues from escaping us; she keeps our merits from being destroyed; she keeps our graces from being lost.” These are the words of St. Bernard. They express in substance all I have said. Were there but this one motive to incite in me a desire for this devotion—namely, that it is a sure means of keeping me in the grace of God and even of increasing that grace in me, my heart ought to burn with longing for it.

IT RENDERS THE SOUL FREE

41. This devotion truly frees the soul with the liberty of the children of God. Since for love of Mary we reduce ourselves freely to slavery, she, out of gratitude, will dilate our heart, intensify our love and cause us to walk with giant steps in the way of God's commandments. She delivers the soul from weariness, sadness and scruples. It was this devotion which Our Lord taught to Mother Agnes of Jesus³⁰ as a sure means of delivering her from the severe sufferings and perplexities which troubled her. "Make thyself," He said, "My Mother's slave." She did so, and in a moment her troubles ceased.

OBEDIENCE TO THE COUNSELS OF THE CHURCH

42. To show that this devotion is rightfully authorized it would be necessary to mention the bulls of the Popes and the pastoral letters of the bishops, speaking in its favor; the indulgences granted to it; the confraternities established in its honor; the examples of the many Saints and illustrious persons who have practiced it. But all that I shall leave out.

INTERIOR PRACTICE OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

ITS GUIDING FORMULA

43. I have said that this devotion consists in doing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary.

SCOPE OF THIS FORMULA

44. It is not enough to have given ourselves once as slaves to Jesus through Mary, nor is it enough to renew that act of consecration every month or every week. That alone would not make it a permanent devotion, nor could it bring the soul to that degree of perfection to which it is capable of raising it. It is not very difficult to enroll ourselves in a confraternity, nor to practice this devotion in as far as it prescribes a few vocal prayers every day; but the great difficulty is to enter into its spirit. Now its spirit consists in this, that we be interiorly dependent on Mary; that we be slaves of Mary, and through her, of Jesus.

I have found many people who, with admirable zeal, have adopted the exterior practices of this holy slavery of Jesus and Mary, but I have found only a few who have accepted its interior spirit, and still fewer who have persevered in it.

MEANING AND EXPLANATION OF THIS FORMULA

ACT *WITH* MARY

45. The essential practice of this devotion is to do all our actions *with* Mary. This means that we must take Our Lady as the perfect model of all that we do.

46. Before undertaking anything, we must renounce ourselves and our own views.³¹ We must place ourselves as mere nothings before God, unable of ourselves to do anything that is supernaturally good or profitable to our salvation. We must have recourse to Our Lady, uniting ourselves to her and to her intentions, although they are not known to us; and through Mary we must unite ourselves to the intentions of Jesus Christ. In other words, we must place ourselves as instruments in the hands of Mary, that she may act in us and do with us and for us whatever she pleases, for the greater glory of her Son, and through the Son, for the glory of the Father; so that the whole work of our interior life and of our spiritual perfection is accomplished only by dependence on Mary.

ACT *IN* MARY

47. We must do all things *in* Mary;³² that is to say, we must become accustomed little by little to recollect ourselves interiorly and thus try to form within us some idea or spiritual image of Mary.³³ She will be, as it were, the oratory of our soul, in which we offer up all our prayers to God, without fear of not being heard; she will be to us a Tower of David, in which we take refuge from all our enemies; a burning lamp to enlighten our interior and to inflame us with Divine love; a sacred altar upon which we contemplate God in Mary and with her. In short, Mary will be the only means used by our soul in dealing with God; she will be our universal refuge. If we pray, we will pray in Mary; if we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we will place Him in Mary, so that He may take His delight in her; if we do anything at all, we will act in Mary; everywhere and in all things we will renounce ourselves.

ACT *THROUGH* MARY

48. We must never go to Our Lord except *through* Mary, through her intercession and her influence with Him. We must never be without

MARY WHEN WE PRAY TO JESUS.

ACT *FOR* MARY

49. 40 Lastly, we must do all our actions *for* Mary. This means that as slaves of this august princess, we must work only for her, for her interests and her glory—making this the immediate end of all our actions—and for the glory of God, which must be their final end. In everything we do, we must renounce our self-love, because very often self-love sets itself up in an imperceptible manner as the end of our actions. We should often repeat, from the bottom of our heart: “O my dear Mother! It is for thee that I go here or there; for thee that I do this or that; for thee that I suffer this pain or wrong.”

PRACTICAL COUNSELS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY SLAVERY

NOT MORE PERFECT TO GO STRAIGHT TO JESUS WITHOUT MARY

50. Beware, predestinate soul, of believing that it is more perfect to go straight to Jesus, straight to God. Without Mary, your action and your intention will be of little value; but if you go to God through Mary, your work will be Mary’s work, and consequently it will be sublime and most worthy of God.^{[34](#)}

NOT NECESSARY TO FEEL AND ENJOY WHAT YOU SAY AND DO

51. Moreover, do not try to feel and enjoy what you say and do, but say and do everything with that pure faith which Mary had on earth and which she will communicate to you in due time. Poor little slave, leave to your Sovereign Queen the clear sight of God, the raptures, the joys, the satisfactions and the riches of Heaven, and content yourself with pure faith, although full of repugnance, distractions, weariness and dryness, and say: “Amen, so be it,” to whatever Mary, your Mother, does in Heaven. That is the best you can do for the time being.^{[35](#)}

NOT NECESSARY TO ENJOY IMMEDIATELY THE PRESENCE OF MARY

52. Take great care also not to torment yourself should you not enjoy immediately the sweet presence of the Blessed Virgin in your soul, for this is a grace not given to all; and even when God, out of His great mercy, has thus favored a soul, it is always very easy to lose this grace, unless by

frequent recollection the soul remains alive to that interior presence of Mary. Should this misfortune befall you, return calmly to your Sovereign Queen and make amends to her.³⁶

WONDERFUL EFFECTS OF THIS INTERIOR PRACTICE

53. Experience will teach you much more about this devotion than I can tell you; and if you remain faithful to the little I have taught you, you will find so many rich fruits of grace in this practice that you will be surprised and filled with joy.

54. Let us set to work then, dear soul, and by the faithful practice of this devotion let us obtain the grace “that Mary’s soul may be in us to glorify the Lord, that her spirit may be in us to rejoice in God,” as St. Ambrose says. “Do not think that there was more glory and happiness in dwelling in Abraham’s bosom, which was called Paradise, than in the bosom of Mary, in which God has placed His throne,” as the learned Abbot Gueric says.

IT ESTABLISHES MARY’S LIFE IN THE SOUL

55. This devotion, faithfully practiced, produces many happy effects in the soul. The most important of them all is that it establishes, even here below, Mary’s life in the soul, so that it is no longer the soul that lives, but Mary living in it; for Mary’s life becomes its life. And when, by an unspeakable yet real grace, the Blessed Virgin is Queen in a soul, what wonders does she not work there! She is the worker of great wonders, particularly in our soul, but she works them in secret, in a way unknown to the soul itself, for were it to know, it might destroy the beauty of her works.

MARY CAUSES JESUS TO LIVE IN THAT SOUL

56. As Mary is the fruitful Virgin everywhere, she produces in the soul wherein she dwells purity of heart and body, purity of intention and of purpose, and fruitfulness in good works. Do not think, dear soul, that Mary, the most fruitful of all pure creatures, who has brought forth even a God, remains idle in a faithful soul. She will cause Jesus Christ to live in that soul, and the soul to live in constant union with Jesus Christ. “My dear

children, with whom I am in labor again until Christ is formed in you.” . If Jesus Christ is the fruit of Mary in each individual soul, as well as in all souls in general, He is, however, her fruit and her masterpiece more particularly in a soul in which she dwells.

MARY BECOMES EVERYTHING TO THAT SOUL

57. In fine, Mary becomes everything to that soul in the service of Jesus Christ. The mind will be enlightened by Mary’s pure faith. The heart will be deepened by Mary’s humility. It will be dilated and inflamed by Mary’s charity; made clean by Mary’s purity; noble and great by her motherly care. But why dwell any longer on this? Only experience can teach the wonders wrought by Mary, wonders so great that neither the wise nor the proud, nor even many of the devout can believe them.

SPECIAL FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SLAVERY

IN THE LATTER TIMES

THROUGH MARY, JESUS WILL REIGN

58. As it is through Mary that God came into the world the first time, in a state of humiliation and annihilation, may we not say that it is through Mary also that He will come the second time, as the whole Church expects Him to come, to rule everywhere and to judge the living and the dead? Who knows how and when that will be accomplished? I do know that God, Whose thoughts are as far removed from ours as Heaven is distant from the earth, will come in a time and a manner that men expect the least, even those who are most learned and most versed in Holy Scripture, which is very obscure on this subject.

59. We ought also to believe that toward the End of Time, and perhaps sooner than we think, God will raise up great men full of the Holy Ghost and imbued with the spirit of Mary, through whom this powerful Sovereign will work great wonders in the world, so as to destroy sin and to establish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, her Son, upon the ruins of the kingdom of this corrupt world; and these holy men will succeed by means of this devotion,

of which I do but give here the outline and which my deficiency only impairs.

EXTERIOR PRACTICES OF THE HOLY SLAVERY OF LOVE

60. Besides the interior practice of this devotion, of which we have just spoken, there are also certain exterior practices, which we must neither omit nor neglect.

CONSECRATION AND RENEWAL

61. The first one is to choose a special feast-day on which to consecrate ourselves to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose slaves we make ourselves. On the same day we should receive Holy Communion for that intention, and spend the day in prayer. At least once a year, on the same day, we should renew our act of consecration.

A TOKEN OF OUR SERVITUDE

62. The second one is to pay to Our Lady, every year on that same day, some little tribute, as a token of our servitude and dependence; such has always been the homage paid by slaves to their masters. That tribute may consist of an act of mortification, an alms, a pilgrimage or some prayers. Bl. Marino, we are told by his brother, St. Peter Damian, was wont to take the discipline in public every year on the same day before the altar of Our Lady. Such zeal is not required, nor do we counsel it; but if we give but little to Mary, let us at least offer it with a humble and grateful heart.

CELEBRATION OF THE ANNUNCIATION

63. The third practice is to celebrate every year, with special devotion, the feast of the Annunciation, which is the patronal feast of this devotion and

was established to honor and imitate the dependence in which the Eternal Word placed Himself on that day out of love for us.

RECITATION OF THE LITTLE CROWN AND THE MAGNIFICAT.

64. The fourth external practice is to say every day the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, which is composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys; also, often to recite the Magnificat, which is the only hymn of Mary that we possess, to thank God for His graces in the past and to beg of Him fresh blessings for the present. Above all, we ought not to fail to say this hymn in thanksgiving after Holy Communion. The learned Gerson tells us that Our Lady herself was wont to recite it after Communion.

THE TREE OF LIFE: ITS CULTURE AND GROWTH

OR

HOW TO MAKE MARY LIVE AND REIGN IN OUR SOULS

Predestinate soul, have you understood, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, what I have tried to explain to you in the preceding pages? If so, be thankful to God, for it is a secret known and understood by only a few. If you have found the treasure hidden in the field of Mary, the precious pearl of the Gospel, sell all that you have in order to buy it. You must make the sacrifice of yourself to the Blessed Mother, you must disappear in her, so that you may find God alone.

If the Holy Ghost has planted in your soul the true Tree of Life, which is the devotion that I have just explained to you, you must do all you can to cultivate it, in order that it may yield its fruit in due season. This devotion is like the mustard seed of the Gospel, “which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof,” and rest in its shade from the heat of the sun and hide there in safety from the beasts of prey.

This is the way, predestinate soul, to cultivate it:

NO HUMAN SUPPORT

This Tree, once planted in a faithful heart, requires the open air and freedom from all human support. Being Heavenly, it must be kept clear from any creatures that might prevent it from lifting itself to God, in Whom its origin lies. Hence, you must not rely on your own skill or your natural talents, on your own reputation or the protection of men. You must have recourse to Mary and rely on her help alone.

CONSTANT CONCERN OF THE SOUL

The one in whose soul this Tree is planted must, like a good gardener, constantly watch over it and tend it, for it is a Tree that has life and is capable of yielding the fruit of life. Therefore, it must be cultivated and raised by the steady care and application of the soul; and the soul that would become perfect will make this its chief aim and occupation.

VIOLENCE TO ONESELF

Whatever is likely to choke the Tree or in the course of time prevent its yielding its fruit, such as thorns and thistles, must be cut away and rooted out. This means that by mortification and doing violence to ourselves, we must suppress and renounce all useless pleasures and vain traffic with creatures. In other words, we must crucify the flesh, keep recollected and mortify our senses.

NO SELF-LOVE

You must also keep watch on insects which might do harm to the Tree. These insects are self-love or love of comfort. They eat away the foliage of the Tree and destroy the fair hopes it gives of yielding fruit, for self-love is opposed to the love of Mary.

HORROR OF SIN

You must not allow destructive animals to approach the Tree of Life. By these animals are meant all sins. They may kill the Tree of Life by their touch alone. Even their breath must be kept away from it, namely, venial sins, for they are most dangerous if committed without regret.

FIDELITY TO RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

It is also necessary to water this Heavenly Tree often with the fervor of piety in our religious practices, in our Confessions and Communion, in all our prayers, both public and private; otherwise, it will stop yielding fruit.

PEACE IN TRIALS

Do not become alarmed when the Tree is moved and shaken by the wind, for it is necessary that the storms of temptation should threaten to uproot it, that snow and ice should cover it, so as, if possible, to destroy it. This means that this devotion will of necessity be attacked and contradicted, but provided we persevere in cultivating it in our souls, we need not fear.

ITS FRUIT: OUR LORD

Predestinate soul, if you thus cultivate the Tree of Life, freshly planted in your soul by the Holy Ghost, I assure you that in a short time it will grow so tall that the birds of Heaven will come to dwell in it. It will be a good tree, yielding fruit of honor and grace in due season, namely, the sweet and adorable Jesus, who always has been, and always will be, the only fruit of Mary.

Happy the soul in which Mary, the Tree of Life, is planted; happier the soul in which she has acquired growth and bloom; still happier the soul in which she yields her fruit; but most happy of all: the soul which relishes and preserves Mary's fruit until death, and for ever and ever. Amen.

“He who holdeth , let him hold .”

GOD ALONE

LITTLE CROWN OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus and Mary, was privileged to behold a wonderful sign in Heaven: “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” This gave rise to the Crown of Twelve Stars devotion which Heaven has blessed with countless favors. St. John Berchmans made it his daily favorite.

This chaplet is prayed to honor each of those twelve stars as they symbolize her motherhood and queenship over all Israel, the twelve stars representing the 12 Tribes and the 12 Apostles. This devotion consists of 12 Aves—one for each star—broken up into 3 groups, each group representing an aspect of Mary’s virtues: excellence, power, and goodness.

Each group begins with an Our Father, and ends with a Glory Be. The entire Crown, then, is the praying of the following arrangement of prayers three times:

1 Our Father 4 Hail Marys 1 Glory Be

Chaplet: On the medal:

Let us offer praise and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity, Who hath shown us the Virgin Mary, clothed with the sun, the moon between her feet, and on her head a mystic crown of twelve stars.

R. For ever and ever. Amen.

On the first large bead:

Let us praise and thank the Divine Father, Who elected her for His daughter.

R. Amen. Say Our Father.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Father, Who predestined her to be the Mother of His Divine Son.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Father, Who preserved her from all stain in her conception.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Father, Who adorned her at birth with His most excellent gifts.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Father, Who gave her Saint Joseph to be her companion and most pure spouse.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary and Gloria.

On the next large bead:

Let us praise and thank the Divine Son, Who chose her for His mother.

R. Amen. Say Our Father.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Son, Who became incarnate in her bosom and there abode for nine months.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Son, Who was born of her and was nourished at her breast.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Son, Who in His childhood willed to be taught by her.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Divine Son, Who revealed to her the mystery of the Redemption of the world.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary and Gloria.

On the next large bead:

Let us praise and thank the Holy Spirit, Who took her for His spouse.

R. Amen. Say Our Father.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Holy Spirit, Who, revealed first to her His Name of Holy Spirit.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Holy Spirit, by Whose operation she was at once Virgin and Mother.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Holy Spirit, by Whose power she was the living-temple of the ever-blessed Trinity.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary.

On the small bead:

Praised be the Holy Spirit, by Whom she was exalted in Heaven above every living creature.

R. Amen. Say Hail Mary and Gloria.

PART III

THE CONFRATERNITY OF MARY, QUEEN OF ALL HEARTS

It is not necessary to join any religious group in order to make and live St. Louis De Montfort's Consecration to Jesus through Mary. However, those who so desire may join the Confraternity of Mary, Queen of All Hearts .

The Confraternity of Mary, Queen of All Hearts, was first established on March 25, 1899. Pope St. Pius X erected it as an Archconfraternity in Rome on April 28, 1913.

1. The "Confraternity of Mary Queen of All Hearts" has had its name changed to the "Association of Mary Queen of All Hearts," and at the same time has been combined with what used to be called the "Association of Priest of Mary, Queen of All Hearts." This was done by decree of the Congregation for Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on 26 April 2001.

Today there are eighty-eight branches of the Confraternity in various parts of the world: the United States, Canada, Haiti, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. There are several hundred thousand members throughout the world.

OBJECT

The object of the Confraternity of Mary, Queen of All Hearts, is to establish within us the reign of Mary as a means of establishing more perfectly the reign of Jesus in our souls.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

One who, after the necessary formation and preparation, pronounces the consecration to Jesus, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, by the hands of Mary, according to the formula of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, may be received into the Association.

The incorporation is made, following the motivated request of the candidate and acceptance by the Director, at the moment when the consecration is made in the presence of the Director or his delegate and its inscription in the register of the Association.

COMMITMENTS

The consecration by which a person engages himself or herself in the Association implies the commitment to live, in one's own state of life, in one's own milieu, in one's own work, the spirit and the spirituality left us by Montfort. The members will seek to make it the heart of their lives, impregnating all their activities and apostolate.

Renewing their consecration each day, members collaborate, according to their possibilities and their own condition, in the apostolate of the Company of Mary following the directives of the Director General.

INDULGENCES

DECREE OF THE APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY CONFIRMING INDULGENCES

PAENITENTIARIA APOSTOLICA

PROT. N. 65/01/I

HOLY FATHER

Ivo Libralato, Procurator General of the Montfortian Company of Mary, in the name of the Most Reverend Superior General of the same Congregation and as such Director of the Montfortian Associates of "Mary Queen of All

Hearts,” together with his Council, humbly petitions: Since the Congregation for Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on 26 April last, duly recognised a new Statute for the former Associations, one clerical, the other lay, to be now reunited in one Association to be called the Association of “Mary, Queen of All Hearts,” he requests that the grant of a Plenary Indulgence made by your Holiness, through a Rescript of the Apostolic Penitentiary, on 12 October 1996, granted in perpetuity, might be attributed to the new Association, by which the members might rejoice and receive the fruit of charity on days of piety, consecrating themselves to Christ through Mary, his most sweet Mother, according to the spirit and admirable example of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.

The APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY, at the behest of the Holy Father, rules that the members may acquire a Plenary Indulgence, provided that, the usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Holy Communion and Prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions) having been fulfilled and any attachment to any sin being excluded, they promise or renew their promise, at least privately, to faithfully observe their own Statutes, on the following occasions:

The day of their enrollment;

Holy Thursday;

The liturgical celebrations of Christmas and the Annunciation of the Lord;

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the feast of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort;

And the first Saturday of every month.

The present rescript to be valid in perpetuity.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

FEASTS OF THE CONFRATERNITY

The Annunciation, March 25, is the principal feast of the Confraternity, because that is the day on which Our Lord came to us through Mary and set us an example of complete dependence on her. The secondary feast is that of St. Louis De Montfort, April 28.

Other special feasts are the Immaculate Conception, Christmas, the Visitation, the Purification, the Assumption and the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27.

Correspondence regarding the Confraternity should be sent to;

Rev. Father Director

The Confraternity

Montfort Fathers

26 South Saxon Ave.

Bay Shore, NY 11706

THE DE MONTFORT
WAY OF TRUE DEVOTION
TO MARY: AN EXPLANATION

FRANK DUFF

CONTENTS

INDEX

THE DE MONTFORT WAY OF TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY: AN EXPLANATION

CONTENTS

THE DE MONTFORT WAY BY FRANK DUFF

MARY IS SO IMMENSE THAT JUST APPRECIATION OF HER. . . .

. . . IS THOUGHT TO BE ROMANTIC EXCESS. . . .

. . . AND DE MONTFORT'S WONDERFUL TRIBUTE TO HER. . . .

. . . OUTDISTANCES THE DEVOTION. . . .

. . . AND THE APPRECIATION OF THOSE WHO READ IT.

OUR DEVOTION IS ONLY THIRD-RATE

. . . AND DE MONTFORT DOES NO MORE THAN MIRROR . . .

. . . THE DIVINE IDEA OF MARY . . .

. . . SO VIVIDLY AND UNMISTAKABLY REVEALED IN PROPHECY.

LIKEWISE, THE ANNUNCIATION SHOWS HER KEY-POSITION.

HER FREE DECISION AND HER FAITH OPENED UP A WAY TO GOD.

SUCH A PAST WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING FUTURE . . .

. . . WOULD BE QUITE MEANINGLESS.

BUT HER MOTHERHOOD OF THE MYSTICAL BODY . . .

. . . CONSTITUTES A WORTHY SEQUEL TO ALL THAT WENT BEFORE.

WORSHIP IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPLEMENT TO DOCTRINE.

THEREFORE THE SOUL MUST GIVE TO MARY A DEVOTION . . .

... CORRESPONDING TO THE INTENSITY OF ITS DEPENDENCE ON HER ...
... WHICH IS A CONSTANT AND AN ALL-EMBRACING ONE.
THE TRUE DEVOTION IS FULL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ...
... OF MARY'S MOTHERHOOD, AND ALSO—STRANGE TO SAY—...
... REPRESENTS THE VERY MINIMUM OF WHAT IS DUE TO HER.
APPRECIATION IS A VITAL ELEMENT OF WORSHIP ...
... AND WORSHIP TOO MUST NOT BE MEANLY MEASURED.
THE WHOLE LIFE, IN FACT, MUST SING ITS DEPENDENCE ON MARY.
THE SPIRIT OF UNION WITH HER MUST ...
... BE PRESERVED BY FAITHFUL THOUGHT OF HER ...
... WHICH NEED NOT ALWAYS BE DELIBERATE OR DISTINCT.
ALL GIVEN TO MARY BELONGS MOST PERFECTLY TO GOD.
BUT THIS IS NOT RIGHTLY GRASPED ...
... SO THAT IT CAUSES PERPLEXITY TO MANY EARNEST SOULS.
CRUDE IDEAS OBSCURE HER VITAL ROLE, SO THAT ...
... SHE CANNOT MOULD US TO HER HEART'S DESIRE.
THE "TRUE DEVOTION" AFFORDS A PROPER PICTURE ...
... OF THE MOTHERHOOD OF MARY AND WITH IT COMPREHENSION ...
... OF THE PROCESSES OF GRACE AND PRAYER.
IT CAN EVEN DISARM THE VIOLENTLY PREJUDICED.
ITS PRACTICE IS THE SYSTEMATIC RECOGNITION OF ...
... THE GOD-ASSIGNED PART OF MARY ...
... IN EVERY OPERATION OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
THE BELIEF THAT THE DEVOTION IS AN ULTRA-SELECT ONE ...
... WILL BE DISPELLED BY THE DIFFUSION OF THE LEGION ...
... OF MARY, WHICH ASPIRES TO DE MONTFORT'S SPIRIT ...

... AND SEEKS TO REPRODUCE IT IN THE WORK...

... AND IN THE LIVES OF ALL ITS MEMBERS.

TO SUM UP, THE DEVOTION DEPENDS ON ...

... THE MASTERING OF ITS BASIC PRINCIPLE.

THEN, IT WILL OPEN UP A NEW WORLD OF MARY.

DEFICIENCIES WHICH READERS THINK THEY FIND IN IT...

... ARE REALLY DEFICIENCIES IN THEMSELVES.

ITS READING MAY BE A TIME OF DESTINY.

HEADLINE SUMMARY

THE DE MONTFORT WAY BY FRANK DUFF

MARY IS SO IMMENSE THAT JUST APPRECIATION OF HER. . . .

Mary, and the place of Mary, as depicted by De Montfort, and with him the Saints and Doctors of the Church, are so immense as to tend to overwhelm. It is variously said of her that she is so far above other creatures that she has nothing entirely in common with them; that she represents an ineffable miracle of the Almighty, approaching as nearly to God as created nature can, exalted above all human and angelic eulogies; that she almost touches the borders of the infinite; in fact, that there is in her something of that infinite perfection which belongs properly to the fruit of her womb; that even she herself does not comprehend her own greatness; that God has conferred on her a species of omnipotence, the omnipotence of a supplication which is always heard; that it is by her, and to whom she pleases, when she pleases, and in the quality and manner she pleases, that all the gifts and virtues and graces of the Holy Ghost are administered; that she is the arbitratix of the salvation of each one of us. So many, so grand are the things that are said of her that not only do those outside the Church profess themselves outraged, but even a majority of those inside take it for granted that these things represent pious exaggeration.

. . . IS THOUGHT TO BE ROMANTIC EXCESS. . . .

The present treatise of De Montfort commonly incurs this imputation. Innumerable of the flights of his genius, expressive of the soundest theological truths, are passed over as being romantic in their nature, not sober fact but the outpourings of loyalty or love. This impression is strengthened by the very beauty of the garment of words in which he clothes his ideas. I fear that to the majority of his readers De Montfort's immortal work means little more than choice dreaming. The word

“extreme” sums up their final judgement of the book, and many would not hesitate to add the term “extravagant.”

Herein they fall into an error which may justly be described as a fatal one. The diamonds of right doctrine—veritably “gems of purest ray serene”—are given to the poor, who think them only glass and throw away what would have made them rich. For mark it well: Mary is part of the essence of the Faith. Lack of appreciation of her role is defect in faith; and defect in faith means impoverished spiritual living.

. . . AND DE MONTFORT’S WONDERFUL TRIBUTE TO HER. . . .

De Montfort’s book has a place of its own in the Church. There is nothing else quite like it. In its doctrine it is eminently theological and profound. Ordinarily, this would narrow its appeal. He that teaches from the mountain-top will not see around him the weak and the poorly-equipped; they have been unable to struggle up so high. But the “*True Devotion*” has a character which has forced it on the notice of the people, and made it a special herald of Mary universally received and given hearing. What an asset to the Church a book like that should be, which teaches profoundest doctrine, yet is read by all. It is certain that everyone who studies the “*True Devotion*” will fall beneath its spell, for the book has everything. It has style, it has fervour, it has intense conviction, solidity, soaring eloquence, the air of authority and inspiration. Every reader will be stirred by the ardent love for Mary which shines forth in the treatise. Many, too, will be moved to enter into the compact of consecration which De Montfort recommends.

Yet, of all its readers, from those who merely thought it beautiful, up the scale to those who entered determinedly on the full practice of the Devotion, how few are found to be giving the book and its teaching any place in their lives after a single year; yes, after far less than a year? In this failure it is not want of good-will which is at work; nor want of natural love for Mary, nor want of desire to love her more. It is that the majority have nothing in their minds to which they can relate his emphatic pronouncements and striking imagery, no soil in which his “Tree of Life”

can strike its roots. Even where his book casts a spell, the spell wears off. For most readers never took as literally true the things he said of Mary. All the time their minds were unconvinced.

... OUTDISTANCES THE DEVOTION. ...

Consider the following, which I have taken quite at random, and suggest as fairly typical. Propounding motives for the making of the perfect Consecration, De Montfort declares that it is the characteristic of Mary to conduct us surely to Jesus, as it is the characteristic of Jesus to conduct us surely to the Eternal Father. . . . Spiritual persons therefore must not fall into the false belief that Mary can be a hindrance to them in attaining to divine union. . . . Other creatures—however holy—may be, but such cannot be said of Mary. He proceeds to urge that why so few souls come to the fullness of the age of Christ is because Mary, who is as much as ever the Mother of the Son, and as much as ever the fruitful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, is not sufficiently formed in their hearts. He who wishes to have the fruit well-ripened and well-formed, must have the tree that produces it. He who wishes to have the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, must have the tree of life, which is Mary, etc.

... AND THE APPRECIATION OF THOSE WHO READ IT.

I fear that those vivid thoughts, which are so true, and should be potent to widen and enliven our conceptions of the workings of grace in our souls, lead most people nowhere. They simply provoke a series of mental query marks. The minds of those who read do not take it as seriously meant that Mary is the tree of life to them, nor appreciate why she, unlike all other holy creatures, will never retard Divine Union. Consequently, they do not understand, except as a merely picturesque expression, De Montfort's plaint that it is because Mary is not sufficiently formed in the hearts of men that so few of them come to the fullness of the age of Christ. We do not possess the groundwork which he takes for granted. De Montfort is like a man talking of what he sees through a telescope to another who has no telescope and is incredulous.

OUR DEVOTION IS ONLY THIRD-RATE

What is the common equipment of knowledge of Mary? It is not an unworthy one. We know her to be the great Mother of God, and that she is also our mother, watching over us always, and to whom we likewise must pray. Yet, between this and what De Montfort insists on as due to her by us, and as necessary to us, if grace is to have its full sway over us, occurs a hiatus. Is it a deep yawning chasm, or is it simply a missing coupling? I venture to assert it is no more than the latter, and that fifteen minutes' thought can put it in its place. Some readjustment of ideas is required in the following directions:

- (a) the place of Mary in the scheme of God;
- (b) what the True Devotion really amounts to;
- (c) the "mechanics" of its practice.

. . . AND DE MONTFORT DOES NO MORE THAN MIRROR . . .

Now, the very first thing of which readers must be persuaded is that what De Montfort says of Mary's place and greatness contains not a particle of exaggeration, but mirrors faithfully the declarations of the Saints and the teaching of the Church about her; that is to say, it indicates the very mind of God Himself. God Himself it was Who first began to tell of her and to sketch out for her a destiny unquestionably unique. For all that greatness of hers had a beginning very far back. It began before the constitution of the world. From the first, the idea of her was present to the Eternal Father along with that of the Redeemer, of whose destiny she formed part. Thus far back had God answered the doubter's saying: "What need has God of Mary's help?" God could have dispensed with her altogether, Just as He might have dispensed with Jesus Himself. But the course which it pleased Him to adopt included Mary. It placed her by the side of the Redeemer from the very moment in which the Redeemer was Himself decreed. It went further; that Plan assigned to her no less a part than that of Mother of the Redeemer and necessarily, therefore, of those united to Him.

. . . THE DIVINE IDEA OF MARY . . .

Thus from all eternity Mary was in a position exalted, alone among creatures, and utterly outside comparison, even with the sublimest among them, different in the Divine idea, different in the preparation she received; and therefore fittingly singled out from all others in the first prophecy of Redemption addressed to Satan: “I will put enmities between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed. She shall crush your head.” (Gen. 3: 15.) Here is the future Redemption summarized by God Himself. Definitely, Mary is to be in an order of her own; even before her birth and ever after, the enemy of Satan; below the Saviour, but next to Him, and like Him (Gen. 2: 18), and remote from all others. Not any Prophet—even the Baptist—is thus set with Him, nor King, nor Leader, nor Apostle, nor Evangelist—including Peter and Paul themselves; nor the greatest among the Popes and Pastors and Doctors; nor any Saint; nor David, nor Solomon, nor Moses, nor Abraham. Not one of them! Alone, out of all creatures that will ever be, she is divinely designated as the Co-worker of Salvation.

... SO VIVIDLY AND UNMISTAKABLY REVEALED IN PROPHECY.

The course of prophecy continues: “The Virgin,” “The Virgin and Child,” “the Woman,” “Woman and Child,” “the Queen seated at the right-hand of the King,” the constantly recurring assurance that a woman is to be a prime element of our saving. What sort of future does this foretell of her ? Do not such things as those which De Montfort, in union with the Church, tells of her, seem to follow logically on ? Hardly do we realize how crushing, how conclusive is the bearing of prophecy on this question of the place of Mary in the Christian religion. A prophecy is a shadow of a thing to come, a glance which pierces time instead of space, a pale outline of a distant prospect. Necessarily, a prophecy must be less vivid, less clear, less real, than the reality of which it speaks. But necessarily, too, it must preserve harmonious proportion with that reality. Prophecy which pictured Redemption as wrought together by a Woman and her Child (and no other with that pair), who crush the head of Satan, would be radically inconsistent with an actual Redemption which relegates the Woman to obscurity.

Thus, if prophecy is truly named, and if Salvation is a life-long working of the Incarnation and the Death of Jesus Christ into the fabric of the human

soul (and Holy Church and Holy Scripture jointly so declare), then in the Christian system Mary must be found with Jesus, inseparable from Him in His saving work, the New Eve, dependent on Him but necessary to Him—indeed no other than the Mediatrix of all Graces, as the Catholic Church sums up her glorious office.

LIKEWISE, THE ANNUNCIATION SHOWS HER KEY-POSITION.

The culmination of the prophecies arrives. The angel of the Lord is come unto Mary, and the fruition of her age-old destiny is now at hand. It is proposed to her that she shall bring into the world Him who shall save His people from their sins, the man afflicted who will make her the Woman of Sorrows. Her consent is awaited and, as the Church teaches, it is awaited in the place of that of all human nature. That woman has become the representative of the entire human race. At that moment the Eternal Father only regards poor fallen humanity through her. Its fate hangs on her word. The Incarnation, on which rests the whole edifice of religion, and all its figures and prophecies, and all the workings-out of salvation, depend on that consent of hers. Surely heaven and earth and all things quiver in an agony of suspense—But no! It was for that moment that Mary had been lifted out of nothingness, made the subject—as St. Augustine says—of an eternal deliberation and a divine preparation, upraised to a sublimity of grace incomprehensible, unsearchable; so that, though faith and heroism far beyond our ken are needed to ensure a decision favourable to us, nevertheless all is sure. The words proceed from her lips which accomplish the greatest event of all time; the Redeemer is now amongst men. The plan of mercy was safe in her keeping, but only safe because her greatness was so great—almost touching, as it did, infinity. Her *fiat* was no formal act, though from remote ages God had built on it the structure of the world's salvation.

HER FREE DECISION AND HER FAITH OPENED UP A WAY TO GOD.

That consent of Mary's was necessarily unique and perfect in its character. It was the *most* free decision ever given by a pure creature. It was indubitably the bravest, purest, tenderest, inconceivably the most

meritorious act ever performed under God. We cannot fully understand why this should be. To our dense minds it might seem natural enough that even one of lesser merit would decide as she did. But such would never be the case, as Catholic common sense unhesitatingly asserts. The arguments of theology declare the same. It is God's principle to require in proportion as He has given. It follows that the almost infinite gifts of grace conferred on Mary were adequately, exactly, perfectly reflected by her in continuous and lifelong acts of incomparable nobility, heroism, love, faith. Above all, this applies to the pivot of all her acts, her *Fiat* to the Incarnation, by which she received the Lord on behalf of all humanity.

Redemption, thus begun, moves swiftly to its consummation. Man for man, maid for maid, and now tree for tree! Jesus hangs upon the tree of the Cross and Mary stands beneath it—ratifying, renewing her offering of her Son for men's sake, and meriting worthily to become, as Pius affirmed, “the Restorer of the lost world and the Dispenser of all the gifts that Jesus purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood.”

SUCH A PAST WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING FUTURE . . .

Who can deny that here is the realization of the first prophecy of Redemption? Here are the Woman and Her Seed, and here has come to pass their crushing of the serpent's head! Together, Jesus and Mary are fulfilling their eternal destiny. Neither in the prophecy, nor in the preparation, nor in the winning of Redemption has she been separated from her Son. Her part has been subordinate to His, but none the less essential, as He ordered things.

But that is not the end. It is only the beginning. Salvation has been won and, so to speak, gathered into the treasury of God. Its grace has now to be administered, applied to each individual soul by acts of virtue and worship. And in that working out of salvation, to use St. Paul's incisive phrase (Epistle to Philippians 2: 12), does Mary simply disappear? Or if she stays, what is her function? Does the past suggest a future for her, and if so, of what description? Now, let those who read De Montfort judge if what he says about her ministry of grace does not attune to what she did as Helper in

the winning of Redemption, and constitute as natural and orderly a growth out of that past as does a flower from its roots. Redemption, like that plant, is a perfect unity. Its earning is the root; its application is the flower.

... WOULD BE QUITE MEANINGLESS.

And on the other hand, can that amazing past, which we have been discussing, be reconciled with the theory and practice of those who deny her any place in their religion, who believe that such part and blessedness as she possessed finished its career at Bethlehem, and was indeed so slight as not to merit a solitary word of thanks from mankind? O, if those doubting ones are right, what an anti-climax! Could we not legitimately complain that God Himself had staged a cruel and elaborate deception—the same as if the Eucharist were only bread!

BUT HER MOTHERHOOD OF THE MYSTICAL BODY . . .

Finished at Bethlehem! No more than did the life and mission of her Divine Son finish there! Their joint and indivisible mission was only nine months in progress on that eventful night. All time still stretches out before it. “For,” says Jean-Jacquot, “it is true to say that the Son of God, considered in His adorable Person, is in some sort but the half of Himself. The other part of Himself consists of the souls of men, of all the souls which are called to form His Church; and thus the Church is called the body and plenitude or the complement of Jesus Christ (Eph 1: 23). Hence, the Son of God, when He presents Himself to the Blessed Virgin, presents all those souls to be received with Him.”

These words at first sight startle. Yet they are but a rendering of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, which is that Christ and the baptized are united by a bond which resembles, but far exceeds in intensity, the union between the head and the other members of the human body. Thus, all are dependent one upon the other and the same life animates them all. The Head is Christ, the chief, indispensable and perfect path from which the other members derive their powers, their very life. They form part of Christ with such completeness that their sins became His burden, while His satisfactions, the

infinite merits of His passion, belong to His members as if the latter had themselves earned them. It is because Christ and His members form together but a single mystical person, that Christ could suffer for men and expiate faults which He had not Himself committed. “Christ is the Saviour of His Body.” (Eph 5: 23.)

... CONSTITUTES A WORTHY SEQUEL TO ALL THAT WENT BEFORE.

And Mary is the Mother of that Body. (St. John, chapter 19.) In so far as we are members of Christ’s Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones (Eph 5: 30), so with equal necessity, and to such extent are we children of Mary His Mother. It is in her bosom, moulded ever more and more admirably to His likeness by her unremitting maternal care, that we grow into the perfect man who is Christ and come unto the measure of the age of His fulness (Eph 4: 13). And without her, this, our sublime destiny, is not achieved; such is the Divine arrangement. Though she is, in comparison to her Maker, veritably as nothing, nevertheless the Eternal Father has thus intimately associated her to His Redemptive scheme, in such way that as no grace proceeds other than by Jesus Christ, so none will be received other than through Mary. She is as definitely part of the Divine dispensation as Our Blessed Lord Himself—subordinate to, and utterly dependent on Him, of course, but none the less an integral and vital portion of the Divine way of grace, an all-important supplement to what we offer, and the invariable channel of what we receive.

WORSHIP IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPLEMENT TO DOCTRINE.

None should be so foolish as to think that the Heavenly Father, having thus given Life to His children through that loving Mother, and continuing through her to afford them all their divine nourishment, will for a moment tolerate from them an undutiful attitude towards her. Worship is a necessary complement of doctrine. Belief without loving service is as a man without memory, or—worse still—without common decency. As our salvation requires that we confess the Lord Jesus Christ, so it requires that we acknowledge the minor but essential office of Mary. As Christian worship is based on going to the Father through Christ, so must that same worship

never lose sight of her who is equally the Mother of that Saviour and of those for whom He died. If we omit her, we thereby turn away from God. For she is definitely portion of God's Holy Will in our regard, so that to slight her is to slight Him.

Thus, the symbolism which the Scriptures have put before us to aid to better understanding of the relation between Christ and His Church, is that of the Mystical Body. We have likewise seen that by virtue of her motherhood of Christ, Mary is true mother of the Christian soul, a motherhood which Our Lord Himself proclaimed at the moment when it acquired its full dominion, that is, when it was consummated by Redemption. If we seek to supplement that image by another which will help us to appreciate the intimacy of the relations of Mary with her children, we have an expressive, though still inadequate one in the life of the unborn babe. That babe is the soul, and its mother is Mary.

THEREFORE THE SOUL MUST GIVE TO MARY A DEVOTION . . .

“All the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up, and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just.” This thought forms the central principle of the “*True Devotion*,” but the words are not De Montfort's. They were written by St. Augustine nearly sixteen hundred years ago, and did not even then represent new thinking in the Church. Indeed, as De Montfort says, the Devotion is bound up with the very foundations of Christianity. What is it but the putting into logical and detailed practice of the Church's teaching on the Mystical Body?

. . . CORRESPONDING TO THE INTENSITY OF ITS DEPENDENCE ON HER . . .

But why should we specify the unborn babe, rather than the infant carried in the mother's arms and nourished with the natural milk? It is for this reason, that the closeness of the relation between the soul and Mary, which De Montfort—with the Church—depicts, would not at all be sufficiently shown

by the babe in arms. The latter is dependent on the mother to a very large extent, but not entirely. It can and does live a little life of its own apart from its mother. It does not draw from her the air it breathes; and portions of its nourishment—all perhaps, in certain circumstances—may be gained otherwise than from its mother. And that mother may go away, or that mother may die, and yet the baby life goes on—in complete independence of her, and conceivably it may fare better without than with that mother.

... WHICH IS A CONSTANT AND AN ALL-EMBRACING ONE.

But how different is the case with regard to the soul.

Devotedly, she carries on her mother's work of sanctification. She receives the Divine graces and, like life's blood, she gives them to the soul. Of that blood, not the very last drop, that is to say, not the smallest grace, comes to us of the Mystical Body otherwise than through the heart of Mary. What a picture of all-embracing dependence! The babe owes everything—absolutely everything under God—to the good offices of that Mother. Thus the babe unborn must be the image with which we help our minds to understand the role of the Mother of Divine Grace. But even that image only feebly indicates the true position. We grown-up people, moving at will, living our lives as we think fit, are nevertheless in a state of dependence on her so close, so intimate, that the confinement of the natural womb is in comparison widest liberty.

THE TRUE DEVOTION IS FULL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT . . .

De Montfort's book is only understandable in the light of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. He assumes in the reader a degree of understanding of that doctrine which is not currently possessed; and here, I venture to suggest, lies the explanation of the difficulties which beset the reading of his book, and the reason why it does not yield up the singular treasures which it holds. But if the idea of the Mystical Body and its implications be grasped, not only does the doctrine of De Montfort's "*True Devotion*" emerge with perfect clearness, but in its train, of course, the whole idea and necessity of

what I must—without apology—call “common or garden” devotion to Mary.

... OF MARY’S MOTHERHOOD, AND ALSO—STRANGE TO SAY—...

In addition, analysis along those lines should make manifest a conclusion which may stagger the majority. It is that a wholesale form of devotion or offering, at least equivalent to that enjoined by De Montfort, represents in reality the only fully logical and worthy service of Mary. It is true that in relation to the everyday standards it may accurately be described as “extreme.” But this is only because those standards are earthbound ones and inappropriate to her who has been borne to the very heights of the finite.

... REPRESENTS THE VERY MINIMUM OF WHAT IS DUE TO HER.

True worship, moreover, must reflect the service rendered. It was by Mary that Christianity came on earth, through her that every act of ours was made a Christian act. If that marked all she did for us, it would be only reasonable that likewise every act of ours should bear some impress of acknowledgement and gratitude to her. But, in reality, that was a mere beginning of her motherhood. The Church describes her as the Mediatrix of all Graces, an appellation which sufficiently establishes her position. Her more-than-mother care continues vital to the soul. Therefore, if every act and thought should render praise to Our Divine Lord for what He has done to us, then every act and thought should in a minor key give some acknowledgement to Mary. Gratitude urges this, and the rules of God require it. That acknowledgement of ours does not establish Mary as our Mother. She is our Mother irrespective of the fact of our recognition, and in face of ignorance or thoughtlessness, and even of repudiation. But the life that she offers can only enter our veins in proportion as they expand to receive it. If grace in plenitude is sought, there must be a complete co-operation.

APPRECIATION IS A VITAL ELEMENT OF WORSHIP ...

Of what sort must that co-operation, that acknowledgement of Mary be? In the first place, it must possess quality, and in the second place, quantity. The first requires that we have a just appreciation of the greatness and the ministry of Mary, and desire to love her and honour her fittingly. This is a vital element, yet not so often found, as is evidenced by the dissent which is evoked by De Montfort's book.

To put it simply, if God desires from us a piece of gold, does it suffice to give Him an equal weight of silver? Or if we prayed endlessly to Our Lord with no higher belief in Him than that He is a holy man in heaven, those prayers would only be a sort of counterfeit. Purity of intention may relieve one from guilt in the tendering of counterfeit, but it does not give the counterfeit the value of the real. No, it is the intrinsic worth, the type and degree of our faith, the intensity of the appreciation, which determine the value of the prayer. We may be praying much to Mary, but only in a copper currency. Whole Rosaries, which are not backed by right ideas of her, may not possess the dynamism of a single Ave issuing from a heart which glimpses what Mary really is, and tries to fill the little prayer with that esteem of her.

... AND WORSHIP TOO MUST NOT BE MEANLY MEASURED.

In the second place, our service of Mary must be substantial, that is, it must take in more than the mere minutes or the stray events of the day. It must be rather a spirit than acts or words which we will offer her. For the spirit contains and bears with it the whole life and not mere bits of it, however numerous. Formal prayers and specific acts must not, however, be thought superfluous. In practice they are indispensable. They are to the spiritual life what the skeleton is to the human body. They give order, definiteness, solidity—a framework to the day's devotion and prevent it from falling asunder. Generally, the more frequent the prayer, the more comprehensive and true will be the spirit of religion which will inspire the life.

THE WHOLE LIFE, IN FACT, MUST SING ITS DEPENDENCE ON MARY.

The precise detail in which this devotion to Mary will be worked out in the life must depend largely on the individual.

As people differ, so will our methods of expression vary. But if there is question of a mode of devotion which will express an exact appreciation on our part of the universal and uninterrupted influence of Mary in our soul, there suggests itself at once as a basis the idea of a Consecration, naturally of the completest sort, which will take into its scope everything about one's life and self which can possibly be so grasped. The act which embodies and inaugurates that Consecration should be formal. It must be understood in all its bearings, and made with earnestness. But it cannot be too much stressed that the important consideration in the Consecration is not the act which initiates it, or even the many acts which may renew it, but the setting up a consecrated state of soul, an attitude of dependence on Mary.

That attitude of dependence on her is the necessary sequel to the moment of the Annunciation, when in effect we were made to depend on her, and God only dealt with us as united to her. We had no other status before Him than as her children-to-be. So now that we are come to her, we must declare that we belong to her. Our daily life is nothing else than the continuation in us of the Incarnation, the formation of Our Lord in us; and as He did of old at Nazareth, now God waits her Fiat and requires our union with her.

THE SPIRIT OF UNION WITH HER MUST . . .

That union is a life, and just like the common life of the body, it demands the regular beating of the heart, the steady movement of the lungs, the stimulus of periodic nourishment. These are the impulses of prayer, ejaculation, act, practice, thought, and other reminders, which warm and renew the soul and preserve in it the spirit of consecration.

There must be order in the spiritual life. A system must be constituted if reality and perseverance are to be attained. That system, as its very name denotes, must necessarily be automatic or mechanical in some respects. But that is not to say that it is thereby undevotional or minus merit. That would be absurd—it would suggest that as frequency grew and a virtuous habit

strengthened, so merit would decline. In general it is the isolated act that thrills with greatest fervour. Remember, too, that God Himself loves system.

... BE PRESERVED BY FAITHFUL THOUGHT OF HER ...

Therefore, the times and the events of the day must be bound to certain prayers and observations. So far as is practicable, these will be multiplied, so that God is thought of and referred to more or less distinctly throughout the day. Then that day, methodized for God, must be carefully sub-methodized to ensure that Mary, too, shall never be completely lost to view. The frequent turning of the heart to her will create the spirit of devotion which we seek. That spirit will pervade the thoughts, and even penetrate into the inmost consciousness, so that wherever the immediate attention is—whether in heaven with the Divine Persons, or very much on earth guiding pick and shovel, or immersed in trying household duties—Mary as well as God is present to the mind. And attention need not—cannot always—be deliberate or distinct. The implement which the craftsman uses accomplishes his work without being consciously viewed all the time. Similarly, attention to Mary the great instrument of the Divine purposes, may be subconscious, yet all the same intense.

... WHICH NEED NOT ALWAYS BE DELIBERATE OR DISTINCT.

“But surely I cannot do two things at the same time ?” Why! you are doing two things at the one time all the whole day long! You are thinking while you are walking, you are praying while you are working, you are eating while you are listening, you are talking while you are seeing. True, you may not be giving to each act an equal degree of attention, but what is given to the lesser is substantial—so much so, that were you to bestow on God Himself, or Mary for God, throughout the day an equivalent amount of general attention, such would constitute you a contemplative of the highest order. De Montfort asks for less for Mary in the practice of the True Devotion. He declares that the habitual attention given to her need not necessarily be more than a general and imperceptible viewing of her.

Two things at the same time! One does not have to be a psychologist to distinguish readily even a third grade of attention, which may be so acute as to declare to be called active attention. For instance, in addition to the processes specified above, you may be simultaneously experiencing pleasure or discomfort of some kind. And then beyond these fairly tangible and active mental operations lies the whole realm of the passive or sub-conscious.

ALL GIVEN TO MARY BELONGS MOST PERFECTLY TO GOD.

But, while it is important to show the hollowness of the above objection, which is launched with such a final air, it is not on any idea of divided attention that the principle of devotion to Mary exists. It rests on the principle, in the first place, that *every* offering to heaven, to whomsoever it may be immediately directed, proceeds through Mary; in the second place, that *everything* thus given to Mary thereby belongs to God, gaining in its passing through her hands—as De Montfort does not tire in repeating—a vast addition and embellishment of merit; and in the third place, that we must recognize and honour this arrangement, which is a dependent part of Christ's own mediation, and due, accordingly, to the Will of God, a secondary acknowledgement.

BUT THIS IS NOT RIGHTLY GRASPED . . .

But no matter what is urged along these lines, misgivings will continue to obtrude themselves. Of these, the crudest one it is which tells the most: “How can I give all this attention to Mary without taking something from God?” The Protestant deems this to represent unanswerable argument. More even than in other points of faith, he sees a practical difficulty, and judges it to be conclusive. It is the old, old story once again: “How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?” The doctrine of such persons must always accommodate itself to alleged practical considerations, to the evidence of the senses or of human reasoning.

. . . SO THAT IT CAUSES PERPLEXITY TO MANY EARNEST SOULS.

Then, from that extreme down the whole gamut of difficulty, that crude objection busily insinuates itself. In the spiritual lives of many Catholics it is a nagging, irritating influence; and if it causes little trouble in the case of others, it is only because Mary is to them—as Father Faber would say—“so little of a Mary.” Their devotion to her is low and thin and poor, a miserable and unworthy shadow, not substantial enough even to arouse an occasional perplexity, far less to inspire their life.

In general, good Catholics realize that devotion of some sort is due by them to Mary. They think they fully satisfy this obligation by drifting with the tide of custom. They say whatever prayers the occasion sets before them. At Mass they may use a Missal or a prayer book. During a visit to the Blessed Sacrament they may have a manual. They may say the Stations of the Cross or some form of Office; and when special forms of prayer are not called for by the time and place, they may say the Rosary. Many people use the Rosary at Mass as well.

CRUDE IDEAS OBSCURE HER VITAL ROLE, SO THAT . . .

In this rough way, undoubtedly it happens that Mary is far from being ignored. The actual amount of prayers which is addressed to her by those who pray at all is by no means inconsiderable. The elements of Christian doctrine, which all have learned, the popular manuals on devotion to her, and the force of tradition, see to that. But almost always in the background is this unsatisfied feeling about her—the “crude objection.” A letter appears in some Catholic paper, which simply screams at the idea of saying the Rosary during Mass. It elicits others of the same kind. Surely, it has struck a responsive chord in far too many hearts; for it becomes painfully obvious that the real point is not the Missal or the Rosary at all, but something deep and serious. The Marian background of all those people is defective. The *Missal* may be better, but not as *they* use it. Then how feeble is the reply which follows; attack or defence—hardly one appears to realize the capital importance of the ministry of Mary. Doubts are awakened: “How am I to apportion my prayers as between God and Mary? Am I giving her too much? Am I praying to her in the right time and place? And if I am taking from God by praying to her at one time, is there not the chance that I may

be taking from Him by praying to her at any time? When and where exactly does prayer to her come into season and go out again?”

... SHE CANNOT MOULD US TO HER HEART'S DESIRE.

And then when De Montfort's noble treatise is read, and it is heard that *all* should be given to Mary in order that it may go most perfectly to God—Oh! then the difficulty which had been lulled to sleep by the rhythm of habit, gets up and stretches itself to its full length, and says loudly: “Would I not turn away from God were I to direct all my prayers to her?” No longer is there any possibility of just shirking the issue. For they are in the grip of the idea that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and Mary and the Saints are like so many statues, so that to turn to one means necessarily to turn away from the others. In reality, this is a time of special grace, from which a great servant of Mary might arise after the whole position had been thoroughly thrashed out. But usually our armament of knowledge is not sufficient to bring us triumphantly through that melee. But neither is Mary's hold on our hearts so weak that her cause suffers wholesale defeat. So after a period of bewilderment, perplexity, turmoil, on a scale according to our calibre, we just slip back to the indeterminate state of things which held before that crisis, and which custom had made comfortable. “Mary's man” is not to be!

THE “TRUE DEVOTION” AFFORDS A PROPER PICTURE . . .

And all the time the “*True Devotion*,” which so startled them, held the key to that position. It could oust those crude, objection-brewing ideas of the paths of prayer and grace by placing in their minds a different picture—of superior conviction, based on Scripture, and conformed to every teaching of the Church—that picture of Mary as the indispensable mother of the Christian soul. In her we are conceived in grace, that is, made one in Baptism with Jesus Christ, her Blessed and Divine Fruit; and there we grow during life, one body and one spirit with Him, our only cause of grace, till, through the birth of death, Mary brings us forth to life eternal. The Holy Ghost, pervading Mary, operates with her that growth and sanctification. And over all is the Author of Grace Himself, the Eternal Father.

. . . OF THE MOTHERHOOD OF MARY AND WITH IT COMPREHENSION . . .

This vivid imagery, drawn from human processes of growth, and forming, as already stated, the basis of the “*True Devotion*,” effectively illustrates the processes of Divine Life in us. It aids to a proper appreciation (which the saints speak of as all-important) of the fact that each Divine Person is intimately concerned in every grace, and under them Mary. It gives an indication of the place of Mary in relation to the Most Holy Trinity and to ourselves, and enables us to visualize how she, though not herself the origin of grace, can be a necessary part of every movement of it, of the prayer which proceeds from us, of the gift of life which flows to us. Our Lord may not be addressed or mentioned or even thought of in a prayer, yet every prayer proceeds—through Him, and derives its efficacy from Him. Similarly, in her own degree, Mary plays a vital part in every prayer, to whomsoever addressed and irrespective of the mention of her name.

. . . OF THE PROCESSES OF GRACE AND PRAYER.

If these ideas be assimilated, there is not a notion or a phrase in De Montfort which a little reflection will not make clear as crystal. Likewise, we find that we acquire a notable facility and degree of freedom in spiritual things. We realize that the main element in prayer is not its form, but that the qualities of soul which it reflects and the solidity of its foundation of Christian truth. Emboldened, we give our prayerful inclinations fullest rein, not unduly concerned as to their immediate destination nor subjecting them to rules of mathematical apportionment.

IT CAN EVEN DISARM THE VIOLENTLY PREJUDICED.

Moreover, does not this imagery, and the devotions built upon it, provide a solution even to Protestant perplexity on the score of Mary? Here is a devotion which derives from the Scriptural image of the Mystical Body; which gives her all due to Mary, yet does not violate the right of God and His Christ; but on the contrary, by bringing their Divinity into bold relief, safeguards those rights; which gives a true conception of Mary’s doctrinal position, and at the same time summarily solves the “how much” and the “when” of practice and devotion.

Therefore, does it not afford to those Protestants who possess instinctive love for Mary (and surely there are more than a few of them) a reasonable and simple way of giving her a place in their lives analogous to that she filled at Nazareth and Bethlehem and Calvary, those great Redemptive epochs, where the Woman of Destiny and her Seed fulfilled their prophetic mission in the crushing of the serpent's head?

If those step-sons cannot, at the outset, bring themselves to say any prayer for her, let their prayer to God be made in the spirit of union *with* her; in some way or other she must be introduced into their spiritual life. Soon enough, she will assert her full maternal rights.

ITS PRACTICE IS THE SYSTEMATIC RECOGNITION OF . . .

It has been said above that the acts of attention to Mary should be regular and not infrequent. Definite devotions and prayers directed to her will be incorporated in the daily round. In addition, I will suggest some "devices," the purpose of which is to recall and emphasize the place of Mary in what we might be inclined to look on as our non-Marian devotions. Again, it is insisted that there is no such thing in Christianity as non-Marian devotion. One might as well talk of a prayer which does not belong to Jesus. But, while the truth that Our Blessed Lord is the life of every prayer is not in the faintest danger of being obscured, there is a very real danger—in fact, there is the probability—that Mary may be imagined to be concerned only with prayer in which her name occurs. But, emphatically, Mary has no province on her own part at all. Under Jesus, her Son and her Lord, the whole Christian life is her realm.

. . . THE GOD-ASSIGNED PART OF MARY . . .

The little devices, which I speak of and which typify De Montfort's method, are just an assertion of that Divine principle. They may be very potent for that reason. They indicate and honour Mary's share in those prayers and parts of our life wherein her name is not specifically mentioned. It is nothing daring, therefore, to say that such a little token of Mary, introduced into a longer prayer addressed to God, may immeasurably enhance its

worth. The reason is not that Mary adds anything to God, but that Mary does add something to every prayer to God.

The expedients which I give below will in turn suggest others. One is inclined to make excuses for their childishness, but I recall that in this form of devotion, which we are considering, we are as children—nay, more, as babes. Similarly, many of the examples which De Montfort gives possess an element of the commonplace or human which may not appeal to all. But, as has been wisely remarked, the suitability of the means set at work for the uplifting of humanity must not be estimated according to the nature of God, but according to our own. Let us not forget that the Incarnation itself was made for *us* and for *our* salvation.

. . . IN EVERY OPERATION OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

(a)

In your prayer-book or Office-book or Missal keep a favourite picture of Our Lady, which you will cause to project above the pages while you read. Fix certain “landmarks,” such, for instance, as the turning of each page, which will occasion a resting of your eye on that representation of her who is at that moment, and all the moments of your life, the essential supplement to your prayer and the channel whereby its fruits are entering your soul. This will be a way of keeping in mind and of acknowledging the faithful love of Mary.

(b)

De Montfort suggests the putting of statues and pictures in places where they will arrest the attention, and thus cause the uplifting of the thoughts to God through Mary.

(c)

Every prayer or devotion which is not directed to Mary should be followed by an Ave (Hail Mary) or a Marian ejaculation. Intend this to be a formal ratification of the acceptance of Jesus which Mary made on your behalf at

the Annunciation. Had you, that night, been excluded from her words of consent, you would now be outside the Redemption. Therefore, your life must endorse her representative capacity. At every giving of His grace, God requires that endorsement, expressed or implied.

(d)

Even when not praying to Mary, be fond of holding her beads in your hand. This will serve to remind you that her hands are really always twined in those of you, her child, and that in fact your prayer is always made with her.

(e)

Another expedient may prove of value, especially to those who are in the habit of saying an Office, of which but little is actually addressed to Mary. Every time that you repeat the “Gloria,” simultaneously cause your finger to form (on the page, or on the *prie-dieu*, or in the air, anywhere so long as it is inconspicuously done) the letter M, thereby acknowledging the threefold relation of Mary to the Divine Persons, and signifying that as we receive every grace and blessing from Them through her, so through her we render thanks to Them and give Them glory always.

THE BELIEF THAT THE DEVOTION IS AN ULTRA-SELECT ONE . . .

It is the accepted opinion that the “*True Devotion*” is a select devotion, one for persons of special quality or aided by a special grace—“for oddities and mystics,” too many would bluntly put it. Such a current view marks a doubly serious position. Firstly, it instances a defective popular appreciation of Mary; but enough has been already said on that. Secondly, it means that the chances of improvement are being hopelessly prejudiced. Many will be kept even from opening the book, while those who do undertake it will read it through glasses biased and all out of focus. Reflect how human nature, so influenced, operates, and it will be realized what will be the attitude towards the many difficult things encountered, and how very remote is the *Devotion’s* prospect of acceptance.

. . . WILL BE DISPELLED BY THE DIFFUSION OF THE LEGION . . .

Therefore, of immense interest in this connection is the uprise of the organization known as the Legion of Mary, which is now found widely spread in the world, and which declares itself to be built on a fullness of devotion to Mary which approximates to, or is equivalent to, De Montfort's own special form. The Legion, as it grows, must necessarily dispel false notions on the subject of the "*True Devotion*." In fact, it should completely turn the tables, and in the end convince the world that the "*True Devotion*" is a popular devotion, a commonplace of Catholic life. But why should this be hoped for? It is because the Legion is not composed of special souls or unusual types, but of ordinary Catholics living the everyday life of the world. Its membership comprises the learned and the unlearned, labourers and leisured, the unemployed, widely differing classes, colours, races, including not a few whom the world would classify as primitive or depressed. In a word, it represents typical Catholicism, so that what it can do all Catholics of good-will can do.

... OF MARY, WHICH ASPIRES TO DE MONTFORT'S SPIRIT ...

If Mary is vital to common spirituality, how much more so to those who set their hearts on uncommon living, or who aim at an apostolate? Jesus was not originally given to the world—nor is He now—save by Mary. The Legion fully recognizes this. Its title is not intended to be an empty one. The Legion is built, from top to bottom and through and through, on this most potent principle of union with Mary. By a deliberate, full, filial, acknowledgement in thought, word and deed, of that principle, it aspires to attract to itself this fruitful, this necessary, action of Mary, which it will then lavish on souls through the medium of its intensive apostolate.

... AND SEEKS TO REPRODUCE IT IN THE WORK ...

So Legionaries complement their title with forms of prayer, ritual, emblems, which express and keep them in mind of the salient principle of the Legion that they must do all their acts in a spirit of union with Mary; in such sort that (as De Montfort, quoting St. Ambrose, puts it) the soul of Mary will be in each of them to magnify the Lord; so much so that they will be able to say to God with confidence, "Behold Mary Your handmaid; be it

done unto me according to Your word.” From the first meeting they attend, in the first task assigned to them, they learn that they must expect to accomplish anything of worth only in the measure that their service of their neighbour embodies this principle. For—note it well—what they are inclined to *call* their work, is in reality *Mary’s own* proper and essential work. She was engaged on that work before they were born. She has, in fact, been exquisitely busied on it from the time of the Annunciation to this very day; for Christ and His Mystical Body are one. Hence, legionaries do not really bring Mary to help them in their service of the other members of the Mystical Body. Mary it is who summons *them* to assist *her*. No one can take part save by her gracious permission.

... AND IN THE LIVES OF ALL ITS MEMBERS.

Such being the spirit of the whole Legionary work, it will be realized how desirable it is that every legionary—not alone its active members, but likewise each one of its great host of auxiliary members—should, if possible, possess a copy of De Montfort’s monumental exposition of the “*True Devotion*.” They should read it again and again, and fully comprehend it and bring it into whole-hearted play in their spiritual life. Only then will they enter into the spirit of the Legion of Mary, to which as the Legion itself declares, Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort is veritably tutor.

TO SUM UP, THE DEVOTION DEPENDS ON ...

I have come to the end. Now just a word of summing up.

I have carefully refrained from attempting a commentary or a paraphrase of the book. I felt that something different was needed. In the course of these pages I have referred to the ordinary reader of De Montfort as being like a man in need of a telescope, and by “ordinary reader” I fear I mean almost every reader. I have dearly longed to construct that homely instrument—in which a few lenses are so contrived that they adjust the vision to a new relation—a secret of nature to supplement De Montfort’s “secret of grace.”

. . . THE MASTERING OF ITS BASIC PRINCIPLE.

It will be seen that I have done nothing more than pick out one idea from the book. I have tried to show that it is its central idea, and in fact the key to the book. I have tried to explain that idea, which is part and parcel of the idea of the Mystical Body, and which is crystallized in the extract from St. Augustine which has been quoted. [“All the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up, and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just.”] Finally, it has been my contention that if all the other ideas of the book are brought into relation to that central idea, they take on a simplicity of form which they had not before; or rather everything is as it was before, but we see it differently.

THEN, IT WILL OPEN UP A NEW WORLD OF MARY.

However clumsily I have performed my labour of love, I cannot help feeling that the effect of this simple “telescope” is startling; that when it is applied to the *True Devotion* by the “ordinary reader,” a new world is opened up to him. Ideas which appeared to be fantastic are discovered to be necessary doctrine. What were thought to be perfervid outbursts have become ice-cold theology. A select devotion is seen to be in reality the practice of a common but pure Catholicism. The almost incomprehensible is shown to be so easy and so logical that I have actually found myself suggesting it as an efficacious means of conciliating the prejudices even of the ultra-prejudiced against Mary.

DEFICIENCIES WHICH READERS THINK THEY FIND IN IT . . .

My “telescope” is not built upon the book. Other than when dealing with some typical objections, I have hardly quoted from the latter. I could almost have left out De Montfort’s name altogether. I have sought in this way to emphasize the fact that this Introduction, though made to point at the book, is as independent of it as a telescope is of the star. This completely

independent treatment of the subject, ending in the same conclusions, gives it some added value as an aid to the book.

Every objection to the *True Devotion* which I have mentioned in these pages has oppressed myself. I also speak with knowledge of the views of a very great number who have read the book. I am not going to traverse ground already covered. I simply say that some “adjusting-mechanism” is required. I think the lines of mine are generally right, but if it does not work, it is imperative that someone should attempt another. I would have been glad to have something of the kind a score of years ago when first I read the “*True Devotion*.” I still have vivid recollections of that first reading. The book was laid aside. I would not have opened it again but for the dear tyranny of a friend. He exacted repeated readings, which were grudgingly conceded. Then gradually it dawned on me that the book was an inspired production; that it was right and I was wrong; what it said was true and had the character of a special message; the excesses which I thought I found in it were really deficiencies in myself, wide gaps in knowledge and apprehension. I realized that I must try to fill them in, and to some extent succeeded. Ever since, the book has been a source of light to me, so that I add myself to those who bless the day in which it came to them.

... ARE REALLY DEFICIENCIES IN THEMSELVES.

I must be pardoned for this last-moment lapse into the personal; I would have wished it otherwise. But I desperately desire to assert my kinship of experience with all those countless first-time readers of the “*True Devotion*,” who will consider it “extreme,” and may be minded to put it disastrously from them. That kinship entitles me to tell them that the fault is in themselves. They really only look on Mary as a very influential friend, whereas she is the very mother of their soul; not as mother of the born, nor even of the unborn babe, but more intense, far more vital—the mother of our all-dependence, as De Montfort gloriously shows her,—Mother of grace.

ITS READING MAY BE A TIME OF DESTINY.

According to their faith will they receive; so from this point may every reader start in a receptive spirit, and may the princely treatise be to each of them “the fair beginning of a nobler time.”

HEADLINE SUMMARY

Mary is So Immense That Just Appreciation of Her. . . .

. . . Is Thought to be Romantic Excess. . . .

. . . And De Montfort's Wonderful Tribute to Her. . . .

. . . Outdistances the Devotion. . . .

. . . And the Appreciation of Those Who Read It.

Our Devotion Is Only Third-Rate

. . . And De Montfort Does No More Than Mirror . . .

. . . The Divine Idea of Mary . . .

. . . So Vividly and Unmistakably Revealed in Prophecy.

Likewise, the Annunciation Shows Her Key-Position.

Her Free Decision and Her Faith Opened Up a Way to God.

Such a Past Without a Corresponding Future . . .

. . . Would be Quite Meaningless.

But Her Motherhood of The Mystical Body . . .

. . . Constitutes a Worthy Sequel To All That Went Before.

Worship is an Essential Complement to Doctrine.

Therefore the Soul Must Give to Mary a Devotion . . .

. . . Corresponding to the Intensity of Its Dependence on Her . . .

. . . Which is a Constant and An All-Embracing One.

The True Devotion is Full Acknowledgement . . .

. . . Of Mary's Motherhood, and Also—Strange to Say—. . .

. . . Represents the Very Minimum of What is Due to Her.
Appreciation is a Vital Element of Worship . . .
. . . And Worship Too Must Not be Meanly Measured.
The Whole Life, in Fact, Must Sing its Dependence on Mary.
The Spirit of Union With Her Must . . .
. . . Be Preserved by Faithful Thought of Her . . .
. . . Which Need Not Always Be Deliberate or Distinct.
All Given to Mary Belongs Most Perfectly to God.
But This is Not Rightly Grasped . . .
. . . So That It Causes Perplexity to Many Earnest Souls.
Crude Ideas Obscure Her Vital Role, So That . . .
. . . She Cannot Mould Us to Her Heart's Desire.
The "True Devotion" Affords a Proper Picture . . .
. . . Of the Motherhood of Mary and With it Comprehension . . .
. . . Of the Processes of Grace and Prayer.
It Can Even Disarm the Violently Prejudiced.
Its Practice is the Systematic Recognition of . . .
. . . The God-Assigned Part of Mary . . .
. . . In Every Operation of the Spiritual Life.
The Belief that the Devotion is an Ultra-Select One . . .
. . . Will be Dispelled by the Diffusion of the Legion . . .
. . . Of Mary, Which Aspires to De Montfort's Spirit . . .
. . . And Seeks to Reproduce It in the Work . . .
. . . And in the Lives of All Its Members.
To Sum Up, the Devotion Depends On . . .
. . . The Mastering of Its Basic Principle.

Then, It Will Open Up a New World of Mary.

Deficiencies Which Readers Think They Find In It . . .

. . . Are Really Deficiencies in Themselves.

Its Reading May be a Time of Destiny.

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

TRANSLATED BY
MARY BARBOUR

Copyright © 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing.
All rights reserved.

Copyright © 1954 by Montfort Fathers, Bay Shore, N.Y., US.
Retypeset and republished in 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing. Cover design by Catholic Way
Publishing.

Including supplementary Rosary Prayers.

This work is published for the greater Glory of Jesus Christ through His most Holy Mother Mary and
for the sanctification of the militant Church and her members.

The typography of this book is the property of Catholic Way Publishing and may not be reproduced,
in whole or in part, without written permission of the Publisher.

Catholic Way Publishing® and the associated logo are registered Trademarks of the Catholic Way
Publishing Company.

Available in Paperback.

CONTENTS

INDEX

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

CONTENTS

PREFACE

DEDICATION

A WHITE ROSE
FOR PRIESTS

A RED ROSE
FOR SINNERS

A MYSTICAL ROSE TREE
FOR DEVOUT SOULS

A ROSE BUD
FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

WHAT THE ROSARY IS

FIRST ROSE
PRAYERS

SECOND ROSE
ORIGIN AND NAME

THIRD ROSE
SAINT DOMINIC

FOURTH ROSE
BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE

FIFTH ROSE
CONFRATERNITY

SIXTH ROSE
MARY'S PSALTER

SEVENTH ROSE
CROWN OF ROSES

EIGHTH ROSE
MARVELS OF THE ROSARY

NINTH ROSE
ENEMIES

TENTH ROSE
MIRACLES

ELEVENTH ROSE
THE CREED

TWELFTH ROSE
THE OUR FATHER, PART 1

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN,

HALLOWED BE THY NAME:

THY KINGDOM COME:

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS
AGAINST US:

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:

AMEN (SO BE IT).

THIRTEENTH ROSE
THE OUR FATHER, PART 2

FOURTEENTH ROSE
THE OUR FATHER, PART 3

FIFTEENTH ROSE
THE HAIL MARY

SIXTEENTH ROSE
THE HAIL MARY—BEAUTY

SEVENTEENTH ROSE
THE HAIL MARY—FRUITS

EIGHTEENTH ROSE
THE HAIL MARY—BLESSINGS

NINETEENTH ROSE
HAPPY EXCHANGE

TWENTIETH ROSE
THE HAIL MARY—EXPLANATION

“HOLY MARY

MOTHER OF GOD—

PRAY FOR US, SINNERS—

NOW,

AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH,

AMEN. SO BE IT.”

TWENTY-FIRST ROSE
THE FIFTEEN MYSTERIES

TWENTY-SECOND ROSE
LIKENS TO CHRIST

TWENTY-THIRD ROSE
A MEMORIAL

TWENTY-FOURTH ROSE
MEANS OF PERFECTION

TWENTY-FIFTH ROSE
THE WEALTH OF SANCTIFICATION

TWENTY-SIXTH ROSE
SUBLIME PRAYER

TWENTY-SEVENTH ROSE
BENEFITS

TWENTY-EIGHTH ROSE
SALUTARY EFFECTS

TWENTY-NINTH ROSE
MEANS OF SALVATION

THIRTIETH ROSE
CONFRATERNITY PRIVILEGES

THIRTY-FIRST ROSE
BLANCHE OF CASTILLE—ALPHONSUS VIII

THIRTY-SECOND ROSE
DON PEREZ

THIRTY-THIRD ROSE
A DIABOLICAL POSSESSION

THIRTY-FOURTH ROSE
SIMON DE MONTFORT, ALAN DE LANVALLAY AND OTHÈRE

THIRTY-FIFTH ROSE
CARDINAL PIERRE

THIRTY-SIXTH ROSE
FREED FROM SATAN

THIRTY-SEVENTH ROSE
A MONASTERY REFORMED

THIRTY-EIGHTH ROSE
A BISHOP'S DEVOTION

THIRTY-NINTH ROSE
A PARISH TRANSFORMED

FORTIETH ROSE
ADMIRABLE EFFECTS

HOW TO RECITE IT

FORTY-FIRST ROSE
PURITY OF INTENTION

FORTY-SECOND ROSE
WITH ATTENTION

FORTY-THIRD ROSE
FIGHTING DISTRACTIONS

FORTY-FOURTH ROSE
A GOOD METHOD

FORTY-FIFTH ROSE
WITH REVERENCE

FORTY-SIXTH ROSE
GROUP RECITATION

[FORTY-SEVENTH ROSE](#)
[PROPER DISPOSITIONS](#)

[FORTY-EIGHTH ROSE](#)
[PERSEVERANCE](#)

[FORTY-NINTH ROSE](#)
[INDULGENCES](#)

[FIFTIETH ROSE](#)
[VARIOUS METHODS](#)

[METHODS OF SAYING THE MOST HOLY ROSARY SO AS TO DRAW UPON OUR
SOULS THE GRACE OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE, PASSION AND GLORY OF
JESUS AND MARY](#)

[FIRST METHOD](#)

[OFFERING OF THE ROSARY:](#)

[HOW TO OFFER EACH DECADE](#)

[THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES](#)

[THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES](#)

[THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES](#)

[SECOND METHOD](#)

[A SHORTER WAY OF COMMEMORATING THE LIFE, DEATH AND GLORY OF
JESUS AND MARY IN THE MOST HOLY ROSARY, AND A WAY TO CURB OUR
IMAGINATION AND TO LESSEN DISTRACTIONS](#)

[THE MAIN RULES OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY](#)

[APPENDIX](#)

[THE POWER, VALUE AND HOLINESS OF THE ROSARY. A REVELATION OF OUR
BLESSED LADY TO BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE](#)

[THE SALUTATION OF THE ROSARY IS WORTHY OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN](#)

[INDULGENCES](#)

[THE NEW NORMS](#)

[INDULGENCES FOR PRAYING THE ROSARY](#)

[NOTE TO THE READER](#)

PRAYERS USED ON THE HOLY ROSARY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

THE OUR FATHER

THE HAIL MARY

THE GLORY BE

THE APOSTLES' CREED

FATIMA DECADE PRAYER

HAIL HOLY QUEEN (SALVE REGINA)

PARTIAL INDULGENCE

PREFACE

BIOGRAPHERS have already told us much about St. Louis De Montfort and the Rosary; now, with this first English edition of THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY, we can listen to Montfort speaking for himself. Drawing upon his own experience as well as upon the experience of others,³⁷ he endeavors to bring home to the reader, “in a simple and straightforward manner,” as he himself tells us, the authentic message of the Rosary; namely, that it is a veritable school of Christian life. He sees it as including essentially the meditation of the mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus and Mary, with a view not only to honoring but especially imitating their virtues as held up to our consideration in each mystery.

For our Saint, the Rosary was not simply a method of prayer: it was his most effective tool and weapon in his apostolic work. Fittingly has the Church called him an “Extraordinary preacher of the Rosary.” He preached it in season and out of season; established it in every parish where he gave a mission³⁸ and judged the fruits of the mission by the subsequent perseverance in its recitation. There was no limit to the power of the Rosary and to it he attributed much of his success with sinners. “Let me but place my rosary around a sinner’s neck,” he was wont to say, “and he will not escape me.”

A Dominican Tertiary himself, De Montfort represents the best in the Dominican Rosary tradition. Speaking of our Saint’s contribution to the Rosary, Father R. Poupon, well known Dominican writer says, “Montfort’s genius prolongs in one straight line that of Blessed Alan de la Roche and of St. Dominic. He completes them by bringing forth a personal grace and interpretation.” Commenting on De Montfort’s book, Father William says, “It goes far beyond mere research. We might say that it contains everything

that can be said about the Rosary, about its content and form, its real worth, about the instruction necessary for its appreciation and use.”³⁹

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY was written almost two and a half centuries ago, it is true, but it has lost none of its freshness and timeliness. Indeed, today, in the light of the specific requests of Our Lady of Fatima, it will be doubly welcomed by all true clients of Our Lady. We feel confident that it will bring many souls to a better understanding of the Rosary not only as a prayer but especially as a way of spiritual life.

THE EDITORS

DEDICATION

A WHITE ROSE: FOR PRIESTS

DEAR MINISTERS of the Most High, you my fellow priests who preach the truth of God and who teach the gospel to all nations, let me give you this little book as a white rose that I would like you to keep. The truths contained in it are set forth in a very simple and straightforward manner as you will see. Please keep them in your heart so that you yourselves may make a practice of the Holy Rosary and taste its fruit; and please have them always on your lips too so that you will always preach the Rosary and thus convert others by teaching them the excellence of this holy devotion.

I beg of you to beware of thinking of the Rosary as something of little importance—as do ignorant people and even several great but proud scholars. Far from being insignificant, the Rosary is a priceless treasure which is inspired by God.

Almighty God has given it to you because He wants you to use it as a means to convert the most hardened sinners and the most obstinate heretics. He has attached to it grace in this life and glory in the next. The Saints have said it faithfully and the Popes have endorsed it.

When the Holy Spirit has revealed this secret to a priest and director of souls, how blessed is that priest! For the vast majority of people fail to know this secret or else only know it superficially. If such a priest really understands this secret he will say the Rosary every day and will encourage others to say it. God and His Blessed Mother will pour abundant grace into his soul, so that he may become God's instrument for His glory; and his word, though simple, will do more good in one month than that of other preachers in several years.

Therefore, my dear brethren and fellow priests, it will not be enough for us to preach this devotion to others; we must practise it ourselves. Even if we firmly believed in the importance of the Holy Rosary but never said it ourselves, people could hardly be expected to act upon our advice, for no one can give what he does not have: “Jesus began to do and to teach.”⁴⁰ We ought to pattern ourselves on Our Blessed Lord, Who began by practising what He preached. We ought to emulate Saint Paul who knew and preached nothing but Jesus Crucified. This is really and truly what you will be doing if you preach the Holy Rosary. It is not just a conglomeration of Our Fathers and Hail Marys, but on the contrary it is a Divine summary of the mysteries of the life, passion, death and glory of Jesus and Mary.

I could tell you at great length of the grace God gave me to know by experience the effectiveness of the preaching of the Holy Rosary and of how I have seen, with my own eyes, the most wonderful conversions it has brought about. I would gladly tell you all these things if I thought that it would move you to preach this beautiful devotion, in spite of the fact that priests are not in the habit of doing so these days. But instead of all this I think it will be quite enough for this little summary that I am writing if I tell you a few ancient but authentic stories about the Holy Rosary. These excerpts really go to prove what I have outlined for the faithful in French.

A RED ROSE: FOR SINNERS

POOR MEN AND WOMEN who are sinners, I, a greater sinner than you, wish to give to you this rose—a crimson one, because the Precious Blood of Our Lord has fallen upon it. Please God that it will bring true fragrance into your lives—but above all may it save you from the danger that you are in. Every day unbelievers and unrepentant sinners cry: “Let us crown ourselves with roses.”⁴¹ But our cry should be: “Let us crown ourselves with roses of the Most Holy Rosary.”

How different are theirs from ours! Their roses are pleasures of the flesh, worldly honors and passing riches which wilt and decay in no time, but ours, which are the Our Father and Hail Mary which we have said devoutly over and over again and to which we have added good penitential acts, will never wilt or die and they will be just as exquisite thousands of years from now as they are today.

On the contrary, sinners’ roses only look like roses, while in point of fact they are cruel thorns which prick them during life by giving them pangs of conscience, at their death they pierce them with bitter regret and, still worse, in eternity, they turn to burning shafts of anger and despair. But if our roses have thorns, they are the thorns of Jesus Christ Who changes them into roses. If our roses prick us, it is only for a short time—and only in order to cure the illness of sin and to save our souls.

So by all means we should eagerly crown ourselves with these roses from Heaven, and recite the entire Rosary every day, that is to say three Rosaries each of five decades which are like three little wreaths or crowns of flowers: and there are two reasons for doing this: First of all to honor the three crowns of Jesus and Mary—Jesus’ crown of grace at the time of His incarnation, His crown of thorns during His passion and His crown of glory

in Heaven, and of course the three-fold crown which the Most Blessed Trinity gave Mary in Heaven.

Secondly, we should do this so that we ourselves may receive three crowns from Jesus and Mary. The first is a crown of merit during our lifetime, the second, a crown of peace at our death, and the third, a crown of glory in Heaven.

If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins “you shall receive a never fading crown of glory.”⁴² Even if you are on the brink of damnation, even if you have one foot in Hell, even if you have sold your soul to the devil as sorcerers do who practise black magic, and even if you are a heretic as obstinate as a devil, sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and save your soul, if—and mark well what I say—if you say the Holy Rosary devoutly every day until death for the purpose of knowing the truth and obtaining contrition and pardon for your sins.

In this book there are several stories of great sinners who were converted through the power of the Holy Rosary. Please read and meditate upon them.

A MYSTICAL ROSE TREE: FOR DEVOUT SOULS

GOOD AND DEVOUT SOULS, who walk in the light of the Holy Spirit: I do not think that you will mind my giving you this little mystical rose tree which comes straight from Heaven and which is to be planted in the garden of your soul. It cannot possibly harm the sweet smelling flowers of your contemplations; for it is a heavenly tree and its scent is beautiful. It will not in the least interfere with your carefully planned flower beds; for, being itself all pure and well-ordered, it inclines all to order and purity. If it is carefully watered and properly attended to every day it will grow to such a marvelous height and its branches will have such a wide span that, far from hindering your other devotions, it will maintain and perfect them.

Of course you understand what I mean, since you are spiritually-minded; this mystical rose tree is Jesus and Mary in life, death and eternity; its green leaves are the Joyous Mysteries, the thorns the Sorrowful ones and the flowers, the Glorious Mysteries of Jesus and Mary. The buds are the childhood of Jesus and Mary, and the open blooms show us both of them in their sufferings, and the full-blown roses symbolize Jesus and Mary in their triumph and glory.

A rose delights us because of its beauty—so here we have Jesus and Mary in the Joyous Mysteries. Its thorns are sharp, and prick, which makes us think of them in the Sorrowful Mysteries, and last of all its perfume is so sweet that everyone loves it, and this fragrance symbolizes their Glorious Mysteries.

So please do not scorn this beautiful and heavenly tree, but plant it with your own hands in the garden of your soul, making the resolution to say

your Rosary every day. By saying it daily and by doing good works you will be tending your tree, watering it, hoeing the earth around it.

Eventually you will see that this little seed which I have given you, and which seems so very small now, will grow into a tree so great that the birds of Heaven, i.e., predestinate and contemplative souls, will dwell in it and make their nests there. Its shade will shelter them from the scorching heat of the sun and its great height will keep them safe from the wild beasts on the ground. And best of all, they will feed upon the tree's fruit—which is none other than our adorable Jesus, to Whom be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. So be it.

GOD ALONE

A ROSE BUD: FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS, this beautiful rosebud is for you; it is one of the beads of your Rosary, and it may seem to you to be such a tiny thing. But if you only knew how precious this bead is! This wonderful bud will open out into a gorgeous rose if you say your Hail Mary really well.

Of course it would be too much to expect you to say the whole fifteen mysteries every day, but do say at least five mysteries, and say them properly with love and devotion. This Rosary will be your little wreath of roses, your crown for Jesus and Mary. Please pay attention to every word I have said—and listen carefully to a true story that I want to tell you, and that I would like you to remember.

Two girls (two little sisters) were saying the Rosary very nicely and devoutly in front of their home. A beautiful Lady suddenly appeared, walked towards the younger—who was only about six or seven—took her by the hand, and led her away. Her elder sister was very startled and looked for the little girl everywhere. At last still not having found her, she went home and heart-brokenly told her parents that her sister had been kidnapped. For three whole days the poor father and mother sought the child but could not find her.

At the end of the third day they found her at the front door looking extremely happy and pleased. Naturally they asked her where on earth she had been, and she told them that the Lady to whom she had been saying her Rosary had taken her to a lovely place where she had given her delicious things to eat. She said that the Lady had also given her a Baby Boy to hold, that He was very beautiful and that she had kissed Him over and over again.

The father and mother, who had been converted to the Catholic Faith only a short time before, sent at once for the Jesuit Father who had instructed them for their reception into the Church and who had also taught them devotion to the Most Holy Rosary. They told him everything that had happened and it was this priest himself who told me this story. It all took place in Paraguay.

So, dear children imitate these little girls and say your Rosary every day as they always did. If you do this you will earn the right to go to Heaven to see Jesus and Mary. If it is not their wish that you should see them in this life, at any rate after you die you will see them for all eternity. Amen. So be it.

Therefore let all men, the learned and the ignorant, the just and the sinners, the great and the small praise and honor Jesus and Mary, night and day, by saying the Most Holy Rosary. "Salute Mary who hath labored much among you"

WHAT THE ROSARY IS

FIRST ROSE

PRAYERS

THE ROSARY is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer. In the Holy Rosary mental prayer is none other than meditation of the chief mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother. Vocal prayer consists in saying fifteen decades of the Hail Mary, each decade headed by an Our Father, while at the same time meditation on and contemplating the fifteen principal virtues which Jesus and Mary practised in the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

In the first five decades we must honor the five Joyous Mysteries and meditate on them; in the second five decades the Sorrowful Mysteries and in the third group of five, the Glorious Mysteries. So the Rosary is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer by which we honor and learn to imitate the mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary.

SECOND ROSE

ORIGIN AND NAME

SINCE the Holy Rosary is composed, principally and in substance, of the Prayer of Christ and the Angelic Salutation, that is, the Our Father and the Hail Mary, it was without doubt the first prayer and the first devotion of the faithful and has been in use all through the centuries, from the time of the Apostles and disciples down to the present.

But it was only in the year 1214, however, that Holy Mother Church received the Rosary in its present form and according to the method we use today. It was given to the Church by Saint Dominic who had received it from the Blessed Virgin as a powerful means of converting the Albigensians and other sinners.

I will tell you the story of how he received it, which is found in the very well-known book *De Dignitate Psalterii* by Blessed Alan de la Roche.⁴³ Saint Dominic, seeing that the gravity of people's sins was hindering the conversion of the Albigensians, withdrew into a forest near Toulouse where he prayed unceasingly for three days and three nights. During this time he did nothing but weep and do harsh penances in order to appease the anger of Almighty God. He used his discipline so much that his body was lacerated, and finally he fell into a coma.

At this point Our Lady appeared to him, accompanied by three Angels, and she said:

“Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?”

“Oh, my Lady,” answered Saint Dominic, “you know far better than I do because next to your Son Jesus Christ you have always been the chief instrument of our salvation.”

Then Our Lady replied: “I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the battering ram has always been the Angelic Psalter which is the foundation stone of the New Testament. Therefore if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter.”

So he arose, comforted, and burning with zeal for the conversion of the people in that district he made straight for the Cathedral. At once unseen Angels rang the bells to gather the people together and Saint Dominic began to preach.

At the very beginning of his sermon an appalling storm broke out, the earth shook, the sun was darkened, and there was so much thunder and lightning that all were very much afraid. Even greater was their fear when looking at a picture of Our Lady exposed in a prominent place they saw her raise her arms to Heaven three times to call down God’s vengeance upon them if they failed to be converted, to amend their lives, and seek the protection of the Holy Mother of God.

God wished, by means of these supernatural phenomena, to spread the new devotion of the Holy Rosary and to make it more widely known.

At last, at the prayer of Saint Dominic, the storm came to an end, and he went on preaching. So fervently and compellingly did he explain the importance and value of the Holy Rosary that almost all the people of Toulouse embraced it and renounced their false beliefs. In a very short time a great improvement was seen in the town; people began leading Christian lives and gave up their former bad habits.

THIRD ROSE

SAINT DOMINIC

THIS MIRACULOUS WAY in which the devotion to the Holy Rosary was established is something of a parallel to the way in which Almighty God gave His law to the world on Mount Sinai and obviously proves its value and importance.

Inspired by the Holy Ghost, instructed by the Blessed Virgin as well as by his own experience, Saint Dominic preached the Holy Rosary for the rest of his life. He preached it by his example as well as by his sermons, in cities and in country places, to people of high station and low, before scholars and the uneducated, to Catholics and to heretics.

The Holy Rosary which he said every day was his preparation for every sermon and his little tryst with Our Lady immediately after preaching.

One day he had to preach at Notre Dame in Paris, and it happened to be the feast of St. John the Evangelist. He was in a little chapel behind the high altar prayerfully preparing his sermon by saying the Rosary, as he always did, when Our Lady appeared to him and said:

“Dominic, even though what you have planned to say may be very good, I am bringing you a much better sermon.”

Saint Dominic took in his hands the book Our Lady proffered, read the sermon carefully and when he had understood it and meditated on it, he gave thanks to the Blessed Mother.

When the time came, he went up into the pulpit and, in spite of the feast day, made no mention of Saint John other than to say that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. The congregation was made up of theologians and other eminent people who were used to hearing unusual and polished discourses; but Saint Dominic told them that it was not his wish to give them a learned discourse, wise in the eyes of the world, but that he would speak in the simplicity of the Holy Spirit and with His forcefulness.

So he began preaching the Holy Rosary and explained the Hail Mary word by word as he would to a group of children and used the very simple illustrations which were in the book Our Lady had given him.

Carthagenia, the great scholar, quoting Blessed Alan de la Roche in *De Dignitate Psalterii*, describes how this took place:

“Blessed Alan writes that one day Father Dominic said to him in a vision: ‘My son, it is good to preach; but there is always a danger of looking for praise rather than the salvation of souls. Listen carefully to what happened to me in Paris so that you may be on guard against this kind of mistake: I was to preach in the great church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and I was particularly anxious to give a brilliant sermon, not out of pride, but because of the high intellectual stature of the congregation.

‘An hour before the time I had to preach, I was recollectedly saying my Rosary—as I always did before giving a sermon—when I fell into ecstasy. I saw my beloved friend the Mother of God coming towards me with a book in her hand. ‘Dominic,’ she said, ‘your sermon for today may be very good indeed, but no matter how good it is I have brought you one that is very much better.’

‘Of course I was overjoyed, took the book and read every word of it. Just as Our Lady had said, I found exactly the right things to say in my sermon, so I thanked her with all my heart.

‘When it was time to begin, I saw that the University of Paris had turned out in full force as well as a large number of noblemen. They had all seen

and heard of the great things that the good Lord had been doing through me. So I went up into the pulpit.

‘It was the feast of Saint John the Apostle but all I said about him was that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. Then I addressed the congregation:

“‘My Lords and illustrious Doctors of the University, you are accustomed to hearing learned sermons suited to your aesthetic tastes. Now I do not want to speak to you in the scholarly language of human wisdom but, on the contrary, to show you the Spirit of God and His Greatness.’”

Here ends the quotation from Blessed Alan, after which Carthagena goes on to say in his own words:

“Then Saint Dominic explained the Angelic Salutation to them, using simple comparisons and examples from everyday life.”

Blessed Alan, according to Carthagena, mentioned several other times when Our Lord and Our Lady appeared to Saint Dominic to urge and inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more in order to wipe out sin and to convert sinners and heretics.

In another passage Carthagena says:

“Blessed Alan said Our Lady revealed to him that after she had appeared to Saint Dominic, her Blessed Son appeared to him and said:

‘Dominic, I rejoice to see that you are not relying upon your own wisdom and that, rather than seek the empty praise of men, you are working with great humility for the salvation of souls.

‘But many priests want to preach thunderously against the worst kinds of sin at the very outset, failing to realize that before a sick person is given bitter medicine he needs to be prepared by being put in the right frame of mind to really benefit by it.

“This is why, before doing anything else, priests should try to kindle a love of prayer in people’s hearts and especially a love of my Angelic Psalter. If only they would all start saying it and would really persevere, God, in His mercy, could hardly refuse to give them His grace. So I want you to preach my Rosary.”

In another place Blessed Alan says: “All priests say a Hail Mary with the faithful before preaching, to ask for God’s grace. They do this because of a revelation that Saint Dominic had from Our Lady. ‘My son,’ she said one day ‘do not be surprised that your sermons fail to bear the results you had hoped for. You are trying to cultivate a piece of ground which has not had any rain. Now when Almighty God planned to renew the face of the earth He started by sending down rain from Heaven—and this was the Angelic Salutation. In this way God made over the world.

‘So when you give a sermon, urge people to say my Rosary, and in this way your words will bear much fruit for souls.’

“Saint Dominic lost no time in obeying, and from then on he exerted great influence by his sermons.”

This last quotation is from the *Book of Miracles of the Holy Rosary* (written in Italian) and it is also to be found in Justin’s works (143d Sermon).

I have been very glad to quote these well-known authors word for word in the original Latin⁴⁴ for benefit of any priests or other learned people who might otherwise have doubts as to the marvelous power of the Holy Rosary.

As long as priests followed Saint Dominic’s example and preached devotion to the Holy Rosary, piety and fervor thrived throughout the Christian world and in those religious orders which were devoted to the Rosary. But since people have neglected this gift from Heaven, all kinds of sin and disorder have spread far and wide.

FOURTH ROSE

BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE

ALL THINGS, even the holiest, are subject to change, especially when they are dependent on man's free will. It is hardly to be wondered at, then, that the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary only retained its fervor for one century after it was instituted by Saint Dominic. After this, it was like a thing buried and forgotten.

Doubtless, too, the wicked scheming and jealousy of the devil were largely responsible for getting people to neglect the Holy Rosary, and thus block the flow of God's grace which it had drawn down upon the world.

Thus, in 1349, God punished the whole of Europe and sent the most terrible plague that had ever been known into every land. It started first in the east and spread throughout Italy, Germany, France, Poland and Hungary, bringing desolation wherever it came—for out of hundred men hardly one lived to tell the tale. Big towns, little towns, villages and monasteries were almost completely deserted during the three years that the epidemic lasted.

This scourge of God was quickly followed by two others: the heresy of the Flagellantes and a tragic schism in 1376.

Later on when these trials were over, thanks to the mercy of God, Our Lady told Blessed Alan to revive the ancient Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. Blessed Alan was one of the Dominican Fathers from the monastery at Dinan, in Brittany. He was an eminent theologian and was famous for his sermons. Our Lady chose him because, since the Confraternity had originally been started in this province, it was most fitting

that a Dominican from the very same province should have the honor of re-establishing it.

Blessed Alan began this great work in 1460 after a special warning from Our Lord. This is how he received His urgent message, as he tells it himself:

One day when he was saying Mass, Our Lord, Who wished to spur him on to preach the Holy Rosary, spoke to him in the Sacred Host:

“How can you crucify Me again so soon?” Jesus said.

“What did You say, Lord?” asked Blessed Alan, horrified.

“You crucified Me once before by your sins,” answered Jesus, “and I would willingly be crucified again rather than have My Father offended by the sins you used to commit. You are crucifying Me again now because you have all the learning and understanding that you need to preach My Mother’s Rosary, and you are not doing so. If you only did this you could teach many souls the right path and lead them away from sin—but you are not doing it and so you yourself are guilty of the sins that they commit.”

This terrible reproach made Blessed Alan solemnly resolve to preach the Rosary unceasingly.

Our Lady too spoke to him one day to inspire him to preach the Holy Rosary more and more:

“You were a great sinner in your youth,” she said, “but I obtained the grace of your conversion from my Son. Had such a thing been possible I would have liked to have gone through all kinds of suffering to save you because converted sinners are a glory to me. And I would have done this also to make you worthy of preaching my Rosary far and wide.”

Saint Dominic appeared to Blessed Alan as well and told him of the great results of his ministry: he had preached the Holy Rosary unceasingly, his

sermons had borne great fruit and many people had been converted during his missions. He said to Blessed Alan:

“See the wonderful results I have had through preaching the Holy Rosary! You and all those who love Our Lady ought to do the same so that, by means of this holy practice of the Rosary, you may draw all people to the real science of the virtues.”

Briefly, then, this is the history of how Saint Dominic established the Holy Rosary and of how Blessed Alan de la Roche restored it.

FIFTH ROSE

CONFRATERNITY

STRICTLY SPEAKING, there can be only one kind of Confraternity of the Rosary—one whose members agree to say the entire Rosary of one hundred and fifty Hail Marys every day. However, considering the fervor of those who say it, we may distinguish three kinds: Ordinary membership which entails saying the complete Rosary once a week; Perpetual membership which requires it be said only once a year; Daily membership which obliges one to say it all every day, that is, the fifteen decades made up one hundred and fifty Hail Marys.

None of these Rosary memberships binds under pain of sin. It is not even a venial sin to fail in this duty because such an undertaking is entirely voluntary and supererogatory. Needless to say, people should not join the Confraternity if they do not intend to fulfill their obligation by saying the Rosary as often as is required, without, however, neglecting the duties of their state in life.

So whenever the Rosary clashes with a duty of one's, state in life, holy as the Rosary is, one must give preference to the duty to be performed. Similarly, sick people are not obliged to say the whole Rosary or even part of it if this effort might tire them and make them worse.

If you have been unable to say it because of some duty required by obedience or because you genuinely forgot, or because of some urgent necessity, you have not committed even a venial sin. You will then receive the benefits of the Confraternity just the same, sharing in the graces and

merits of your brothers and sisters in the Holy Rosary who are saying it throughout the world.

And, my dear Catholic people, even if you fail to say your Rosary out of sheer carelessness or laziness, as long as you do not have any formal contempt for it, you do not sin, absolutely speaking—but in this case you forfeit your participation in the prayers, good works and merits of the Confraternity. Moreover, because you have not been faithful in things that are little and of supererogation, almost without knowing it you may fall into the habit of neglecting big things such as those duties which bind under pain of sin. For—“He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.”

This picture, which is the one that graces the cover of the book, is somewhat mysterious in its origin, and was discovered at the time of the 1918 armistice in the cellar of the boarding school where Berthe Petit, a humble Franciscan Tertiary, had been educated. After the troops had departed one of the Bernardine nuns in putting things in order found a piece of cardboard on which was pasted a pornographic picture and she tore it off to consign it to flames. To her astonishment she found that it covered this beautiful representation of the Blessed Virgin! It seems to combine the art of both the Eastern and the Western Rites. The facial features resemble those of the well known Pieta. Prayer before this picture has brought signal favors.

Confided by Our Lord to Berthe Petit: “Teach souls to love the Heart of My Mother pierced by the very sorrow which pierced Mine.”

In Belgium of 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War a special baby girl was born, who was later to become a mystic. She was named Berthe Maria. Before she received any visions from Our Lord, she had received the invisible stigmata: in her humility she had begged that the marks not be made visible. The wounds were very painful for her, especially on Good Friday and other Fridays. She experienced the pains in her hands and feet and side. The worst pain of all was caused by the torment to her head which

was like the pain of thorns pressing into her. This pain was so great and constant she slept but rarely.

It was not until she was 39 years old that the indication of her actual mission was made manifest: During Midnight Christmas Mass she saw the wounded Heart of Jesus and close by was the pierced Heart of His Mother. Then she heard these words:

“Cause My Mother’s Heart, transfixed by sorrows that rent Mine, to be loved.”

“The Heart of My Mother has the right to be called Sorrowful and I wish this title placed before that of Immaculate because she has won it herself. The Church has defined in the case of My Mother what I myself had ordained—Her Immaculate Conception. This right which My Mother has to a title of justice, is now, according to My express wish, to be known and universally accepted. She has earned it by her identification with My sorrows; by her sufferings; by her sacrifices and her immolation in Calvary endured in perfect correspondence with My grace for the salvation of mankind . . .”

“It is hearts that must be changed. This will be accomplished only by the Devotion proclaimed, explained, preached and recommended everywhere. Recourse to My Mother under this title I wish for her universally, is the last help I shall give before the end of time.”

SIXTH ROSE

MARY'S PSALTER

EVER SINCE Saint Dominic established the devotion to the Holy Rosary up until the time when Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established it in 1460, it has always been called the Psalter of Jesus and Mary. This is because it has the same number of Angelic Salutations as there are Psalms in the Book of the Psalms of David. Since simple and uneducated people are not able to say the Psalms of David the Rosary is held to be just as fruitful for them as David's Psalter is for others.

But the Rosary can be considered to be even more valuable than the latter for three reasons:

1. Firstly, because the Angelic Psalter bears a nobler fruit, that of the Word Incarnate, whereas David's Psalter only prophesies His coming;
2. Secondly, just as the real thing is more important than its prefiguration and as the body is more than its shadow, in the same way the Psalter of Our Lady is greater than David's Psalter which did no more than prefigure it;
3. And thirdly, because Our Lady's Psalter (or the Rosary made up of the Our Father and Hail Mary) is the direct work of the Most Blessed Trinity and was not made through a human instrument.

Our Lady's Psalter or Rosary is divided up into three parts of five decades each, for the following special reasons:

1. To honor the three Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity;

2. To honor the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ;
3. To imitate the Church Triumphant, to help the members of the Church Militant and to lessen the pains of the Church Suffering;
4. to imitate the three groups into which the Psalms are divided:
 - (a) the first being for the purgative life,
 - (b) the second for the illuminative life,
 - (c) and the third for the unitive life;
5. And finally, to give us graces in abundance during our lifetime, peace at death, and glory in eternity.

SEVENTH ROSE

CROWN OF ROSES

EVER SINCE Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established this devotion the voice of the people, which is the voice of God, called it the Rosary. The word Rosary means “Crown of Roses,” that is to say that every time people say the Rosary devoutly they place a crown of one hundred and fifty-three red roses and sixteen white roses upon the heads of Jesus and Mary. Being heavenly flowers these roses will never fade or lose their exquisite beauty.

Our Lady has shown her thorough approval of the name Rosary; she has revealed to several people that each time they say a Hail Mary they are giving her a beautiful rose and that each complete Rosary makes her a crown of roses.

The well-known Jesuit, Brother Alphonsus Rodriguez, used to say his Rosary with such fervor that he often saw a red rose come out of his mouth at each Our Father and a white rose at each Hail Mary. The red and white roses were equal in beauty and fragrance, the only difference being in their color.

The chronicles of Saint Francis tell of a young friar who had the praiseworthy habit of saying the Crown of Our Lady (the Rosary) every day before dinner. One day for some reason or other he did not manage to say it. The refectory bell had already been rung when he asked the Superior to allow him to say it before coming to the table, and having obtained the permission he withdrew to his cell to pray.

After he had been gone a long time the Superior sent another Friar to fetch him, and he found him in his room bathed in a heavenly light facing Our Lady who had two Angels with her. Beautiful roses kept issuing from his mouth at each Hail Mary; the Angels took them one by one, placing them on Our Lady's head, and she smilingly accepted them.

Finally two other friars who had been sent to find out what had happened to the first two saw the same lovely scene, and Our Lady did not go away until the whole Rosary had been said.

So the complete Rosary is a large crown of roses and the Rosary of five decades is a little wreath of flowers or a small crown of heavenly roses which we place on the heads of Jesus and Mary. The rose is the queen of flowers, and so the Rosary is the rose of all devotions and it is therefore the most important one.

EIGHTH ROSE

MARVELS OF THE ROSARY

IT WOULD HARDLY be possible for me to put into words how much Our Lady thinks of the Holy Rosary and of how she vastly prefers it to all other devotions. Neither can I sufficiently express how highly she rewards those who work to preach the devotion, to establish it and spread it, nor on the other hand how firmly she punishes those who work against it.

All during life, Saint Dominic had nothing more at heart than to praise Our Lady, to preach her greatness and to inspire everybody to honor her by saying her Rosary. As a reward he received countless graces from her; exercising her great power as Queen of Heaven she crowned his labors with many miracles and prodigies. Almighty God always granted him what he asked through Our Lady. The greatest honor of all was that she helped him crush the Albigensian heresy and made him the founder and patriarch of a great religious order.

As for Blessed Alan de la Roche who restored the devotion to the Rosary, he received many privileges from Our Lady; she graciously appeared to him several times to teach him how to work out his salvation, to become a good priest and perfect religious, and how to pattern himself on Our Lord.

He used to be horribly tempted and persecuted by devils, and then deep sadness would fall upon him and sometimes he used to be near to despair—but Our Lady always comforted him by her sweet presence which banished the clouds of darkness from his soul.

She taught him how to say the Rosary, explaining its value and the fruits to be gained by it and gave him a great and glorious privilege: the honor of being called her new spouse. As a token of her chaste love for him she placed a ring upon his finger and a necklace made of her own hair about his neck and gave him a Rosary.

Father Triteme, Carthagenia and Martin of Navarre (both very learned men) and others as well have spoken of him in terms of the highest praise. Blessed Alan died at Zunolle in Flanders September 8th, 1475, after having brought over one hundred thousand people into the Confraternity.

Blessed Thomas of Saint John was well known for his sermons on the Most Holy Rosary, and the devil, jealous of the success he had with souls, tortured him so much that he fell ill and was sick so long that the doctors gave him up. One night when he really thought that he was dying, the devil appeared to him in the most horrible form imaginable. There was a picture of Our Lady near his bed; he looked at it and cried with all his heart and soul and strength: "Help me, save me, my sweet, sweet Mother!" No sooner had he said this than the picture seemed to come alive and Our Lady put out her hand, took him by the arm and said:

"Do not be afraid, Thomas my son, here I am and I am going to save you: get up now and go on preaching my Rosary as you used to do. I promise to shield you from your enemies."

When Our Lady said this the devil fled and Blessed Thomas got up, finding that he was in perfect health. He then thanked the Blessed Mother with tears of joy. He resumed his Rosary apostolate and his sermons were marvelously successful.

Our Lady blesses not only those who preach her Rosary, but she highly rewards all those who get others to say it by their example.

Alphonsus, King of Leon and Galicia, very much wanted all his servants to honor the Blessed Virgin by saying the Rosary. So he used to hang a large rosary on his belt and always wore it, but unfortunately never said it

himself. Nevertheless his wearing it encouraged his courtiers to say the Rosary very devoutly.

One day the King fell seriously ill and when he was given up for dead he found himself, in a vision, before the judgment seat of Our Lord. Many devils were there accusing him of all the sins he had committed and Our Lord as Sovereign Judge was just about to condemn him to Hell when Our Lady appeared to intercede for him. She called for a pair of scales and had his sins placed in one of the balances whereas she put the Rosary that he had always worn on the other scale, together, with all the Rosaries that had been said because of his example. It was found that the Rosaries weighed more than his sins.

Looking at him with great kindness Our Lady said: “As a reward for this little honor that you paid me in wearing my Rosary, I have obtained a great grace for you from my Son. Your life will be spared for a few more years. See that you spend these years wisely, and do penance.”

When the King regained consciousness he cried out: “Blessed be the Rosary of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, by which I have been delivered from eternal damnation!”

After he had recovered his health he spent the rest of his life in spreading devotion to the Holy Rosary and said it faithfully everyday.

People who love the Blessed Virgin ought to follow the example of King Alphonsus and that of the Saints whom I have mentioned so that they too may win other souls for the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. They will then receive great graces on earth and eternal life later on. “They that explain me shall have life everlasting.”

NINTH ROSE

ENEMIES

IT IS VERY WICKED indeed and unfair to other souls to hinder the progress of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Almighty God has severely punished many of those who have been so benighted as to scorn the Confraternity and who have sought to destroy it.

Even though God has set His seal of approval on the Holy Rosary by many miracles, and in spite of the Papal Bulls that have been written approving it, there are only too many people who are against the Holy Rosary today. These freethinkers and those who scorn religion either condemn the Rosary or try to turn others away from it.

It is easy to see that they have absorbed the poison of Hell and that they are inspired by the devil—for nobody can condemn devotion to the Holy Rosary without condemning all that is most holy in the Catholic Faith, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation and the mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and of His Holy Mother.

These freethinkers who cannot bear others to say the Rosary often fall into a really heretical state of mind without even realizing it and some to hate the Rosary and its holy mysteries.

To have a loathing for confraternities is to fall away from God and true piety, for Our Lord Himself has told us that He is always in the midst of those who are gathered together in His name. No good Catholic should forget the many great indulgences which Holy Mother Church has granted to Confraternities. Finally, to dissuade others from joining the Rosary

Confraternity is to be an enemy of souls because the Rosary is a sure means of curing oneself of sin and of embracing a Christian life.

Saint Bonaventure said (in his Psalter) that whoever neglected Our Lady would perish in his sins and would be damned: “He who neglects her will die in his sins.” If such is the penalty for neglecting her, what must be the punishment in store for those who actually turn others away from their devotions!

TENTH ROSE

MIRACLES

WHILE SAINT DOMINIC was preaching the Rosary in Carcassone, a heretic made fun of the miracles and the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary, and this prevented other heretics from being converted. As a punishment God suffered fifteen thousand devils to enter the man's body.

His parents took him to Father Dominic to be delivered from the evil spirits. He started to pray and begged everyone who was there to say the Rosary out loud with him, and at each Hail Mary Our Lady drove one hundred devils out of the heretic's body and they came out in the form of red hot coals.

After he had been delivered he abjured his former errors, was converted and joined the Rosary Confraternity. Several of his associates did the same, having been greatly moved by his punishment and by the power of the Rosary.

The learned Franciscan, Carthagenia, as well as several other authors, says that an extraordinary event took place in 1482: The Venerable James Sprenger and other religious of his order were zealously working to re-establish devotion to the Holy Rosary and also to erect a Confraternity in the city of Cologne.

Unfortunately two priests who were famous for their preaching ability were jealous of the great influence they were exerting through preaching the Rosary. So these two Fathers spoke against this devotion whenever they had

a chance, and as they were very eloquent and had a great reputation they persuaded many people not to join the Confraternity.

One of them, bound and determined to achieve his wicked end, wrote a special sermon against the Rosary and planned to give it the following Sunday. But when it came time for the sermon he never appeared and, after a certain amount of waiting somebody went to fetch him. He was found dead, and evidently had died all alone without anyone to help him and without seeing a priest.

After convincing himself that death had been due to natural causes, the other priest decided to carry out his friend's plan and to give a similar sermon on another day. In this way he hoped to put an end to the Confraternity of the Rosary. However, when the day came for him to preach and it was time to give the sermon God punished him by striking him down with paralysis which deprived him both of the use of his limbs and of his power of speech.

At last he admitted his sin and likewise that of his friend and immediately, in his heart of hearts, he silently besought Our Lady to help him. He promised her that if she would only cure him he would preach the Holy Rosary with as much zeal as that with which he had formerly fought against it. For this end he implored her to restore his health and speech which she did, and finding himself instantaneously cured he rose up like another Saul, a persecutor turned defender of the Holy Rosary. He publicly acknowledged his former error and ever after preached the wonders of the Most Holy Rosary with great zeal and eloquence.

I am quite sure that freethinkers and ultra-critical people of today will question the truth of the stories in this little book, in the very same way that they have always questioned most things, but all that I have done has been to copy them from very good contemporary writers and also, in part, from a book that was written only a short time ago: *The Mystical Rose Tree*, by the Reverend Antonin Thomas, O.P.

Everyone knows that there are three different kinds of faith by which we believe different kinds of stories:

To stories of Holy Scripture we owe *Divine faith*;

To stories concerning other than religious subjects, which do not militate against common sense and which are written by trustworthy authors, we pay the tribute of *human faith*; whereas

To stories about holy subjects which are told by good authors and are not in the slightest degree contrary to reason, faith or morals (even though they may sometimes deal with happenings which are above the ordinary run of events) we pay the tribute of *pious faith*.

I agree that we must be neither too credulous nor too critical and that we should remember that “virtue takes the middle course”—keeping a happy medium in all things in order to find just where truth and virtue lie. But on the other hand I know equally well that charity easily leads us to believe all that is not contrary to faith or morals: “Charity . . . believeth all things;”⁴⁵ in the same way pride induces us to doubt even well authenticated stories on the plea that they are not to be found in the Bible.

This is one of the devil’s traps; heretics of the past who denied Tradition have fallen into it and over-critical people of today are falling into it too without even realizing it.

People of this kind refuse to believe what they do not understand or what is not to their liking, simply because of their own spirit of pride and independence.

ELEVENTH ROSE

THE CREED

THE CREED or the Symbol of the Apostles which is said on the Crucifix of the Rosary is a holy summary of all Christian truths. It is a prayer that has great merit because faith is the root, foundation and beginning of all Christian virtues, of all eternal virtues and also of all prayers that are pleasing to Almighty God. “He that cometh to God, must believe . . .”⁴⁶ Whosoever wishes to come to God must first of all believe and the greater his faith the more merit his prayer will have, the more powerful it will be, and the more it will glorify God.

I shall not take time here to explain the Creed word for word but I cannot resist saying that the first few words “I believe in God” are marvelously effective as a means of sanctifying our souls and of putting devils to rout, because these three words contain the acts of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

It was by saying *I believe in God* that the Saints overcame temptations, especially those against faith, hope or charity—whether they came during their lifetime or at their death. They were also the last words of St. Peter, Martyr;⁴⁷ a heretic had cleft his head in two by a cruel blow of his sword and St. Peter was almost at his last gasp, but he somehow managed to trace these words in the sand with his finger before he died.

The Holy Rosary contains many mysteries of Jesus and Mary and since faith is the only key which opens up these mysteries for us we must begin the Rosary by saying the Creed very devoutly, and the stronger our faith the more merit our Rosary will have.

This faith must be lively and informed by charity; in other words, to recite properly the Rosary, it is necessary to be in God's grace, or at least in quest of it. This faith must be strong and constant, that is, one must not be looking for sensible devotion and spiritual consolation in the recitation of the Rosary; nor should one give it up because his mind is flooded with countless involuntary distractions or one experiences a strange distaste in the soul and an almost continual and oppressive fatigue in the body. Neither feeling, nor consolation, nor sighs, nor transports, nor the continual attention of the imagination are needed; faith and good intentions are quite enough. "Faith alone suffices."⁴⁸

TWELFTH ROSE

THE OUR FATHER, PART 1

THE OUR FATHER or the Lord's Prayer has great value—above all because of its Author Who is neither a man nor an Angel, but the King of Angels and men, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Saint Cyprian says that it was fitting that our Savior by Whom we were reborn into the life of grace should also be our heavenly Master and should teach us how to pray.

The beautiful order, the tender forcefulness and the clarity of this Divine Prayer pay tribute to our Divine Master's wisdom. It is a short prayer but can teach us so very much and it is well within the grasp of uneducated people, while scholars find it a continual source of meditation on the mysteries of our Faith.

The Our Father contains all the duties we owe to God, the acts of all the virtues and the petitions for all our spiritual and corporal needs. Tertullian says that the Our Father is a summary of the New Testament. Thomas à Kempis says that it surpasses all the desires of all the Saints; that it is a condensation of all the beautiful sayings of all the Psalms and Canticles; that in it we ask God for everything that we need; that by it we praise Him in the very best way; that by it we lift up our souls from earth to Heaven and unite them with God.

Saint John Chrysostom says that we cannot be our Master's disciples unless we pray as He did and in the way that He showed us. Moreover God the Father listens more willingly to the Prayer that we have learned from His

Son rather than those of our own making which have all our human limitations.

We should say the Our Father with the certitude that the eternal Father will hear it because it is the prayer of His Son Whom He always hears and we are His members. God will surely grant our petitions made through the Lord's Prayer because it is impossible to imagine that such a good Father could refuse a request couched in the language of so worthy a Son, reinforced by His merits, and made at His behest.

Saint Augustine says that whenever we say the Our Father devoutly our venial sins are forgiven. The just man falls seven times a day, but in the Lord's Prayer he will find seven petitions which will both help him to avoid downfalls and will protect him from his spiritual enemies. Our Lord, knowing how weak and helpless we are, and how many difficulties we get into, made His Prayer short and easy to say, so that if we say it devoutly and often we can be sure that Almighty God will quickly come to our aid.

I have a word for you, devout souls, who pay little attention to the prayer that the Son of God gave us Himself and asked us all to say: It is high time for you to change your way of thinking. You only like prayers that men have written—as though anybody, even the most inspired man in the whole world, could possibly know more about how we ought to pray than Jesus Christ Himself! You look for prayers in books written by other men almost as though you were ashamed of saying the Prayer that Our Lord told us to say.

You have managed to convince yourself that the prayers in these books are for scholars and for rich people of the upper classes and that the Rosary is only for women and children and the lower classes. As if the prayers and praises which you have been reading were more beautiful and more pleasing to God than those which are to be found in the Lord's Prayer! It is a very dangerous temptation to lose interest in the Prayer that Our Lord gave us and to take up prayers that men have written instead.

Not that I disapprove of prayers that the Saints have written so as to encourage the faithful to praise God, but it is not to be endured that they should prefer the latter to the Prayer which was uttered by Wisdom Incarnate. If they ignore this Prayer it is just as though they pass up the spring to go after the brook and refusing the clear water, drink dirty water instead. Because the Rosary made up of the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation, is this clear and ever flowing water which comes from the Fountain of Grace, whereas other prayers which they look for in books are nothing but tiny streams which spring from this fountain.

People who say Our Lord's Prayer carefully, weighing every word and meditating upon it, may indeed call themselves blessed for they find therein everything that they need or can wish for.

When we say this wonderful prayer we touch God's heart at—the very outset by calling Him by the sweet name of Father—Our Father. He is the dearest of fathers: all-powerful in His creation, wonderful in the way He maintains the world, completely lovable in His Divine Providence,—always good and infinitely so in the Redemption. We have God for our Father, so we are all brothers—and Heaven is our homeland and our heritage. This should be more than enough to teach us to love God and our neighbor and to be detached from the things of this world.

So we ought to love our Heavenly Father and should say to Him over and over again:

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN,

Thou Who dost fill Heaven and earth
With the immensity of Thy Being,
Thou Who art present everywhere—
Thou Who art in the Saints By Thy glory,
In the damned By Thy Justice,
In the good By Thy grace—
And even in sinners
By the patience
With which Thou dost tolerate them—
Grant we beseech Thee
That we may always remember

That we come from Thee;
Grant that we may live
As Thy true children ought to live—
Grant that we may set our course
Towards Thee
And never swerve—
Grant that we may use
Our every power,
Our hearts and souls and strength
To tend towards Thee And THEE ALONE.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME:

King David, the prophet, said that the name of the Lord is holy and awe-inspiring, and Isaiahs that Heaven is always echoing with the praises of the Seraphim who unceasingly praise the holiness of the Lord God of Hosts.

We ask here that all the world may learn to know and adore the attributes of our God Who is so great and so holy. We ask that He may be known, loved and adored by pagans, Turks, Jews, barbarians and by all infidels—that all men may serve and glorify Him by a living faith, a staunch hope, a burning charity and by renouncing all erroneous beliefs. This all adds up to say that we pray that all men may be holy, because our God Himself is all-holy.

THY KINGDOM COME:

Do Thou reign in our souls
By Thy grace
So that after death
We may be found meet
To reign with Thee
In Thy Kingdom
In perfect and unending bliss.
Oh Lord we firmly believe In this happiness to come;
We hope for and we expect it,
Because God the Father Has promised it
In His great goodness;
It was purchased for us
By the merits of God the Son
And God the Holy Spirit
He Who is the Light
Has made it known to us.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:

As Tertullian says, this sentence does not in the least mean that we are afraid of people thwarting God's designs because nothing whatsoever can happen without Divine Providence having foreseen it and having made it fit into His plans beforehand. No obstruction in the whole world can possibly prevent the will of God from being carried out.

Rather, when we say *Thy will be done*, we ask God to make us humbly resigned to all that He has seen fit to send us in this life. We also ask Him to help us to do, in all things and at all times, His Holy will, made known to us by the Commandments, promptly, lovingly and faithfully as the Saints and Angels do it in Heaven.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:

Our Lord taught us to ask God for everything that we need whether in the spiritual or temporal order. By asking for our daily bread we humbly admit our own poverty and insufficiency and pay tribute to our God, knowing that all temporal goods come from His Divine Providence.

When we say *bread* we ask for that which is just necessary to live; and, of course, this does not include luxuries.

We ask for this bread today *this day* which means that we are concerned only for the present, leaving the morrow in the hands of Providence.

And when we ask for our *daily bread* we recognize that we need God's help every day and that we are entirely dependent upon Him for His help and protection.

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US:

Every sin, say Saint Augustine and Tertullian, is a debt which we contract towards Almighty God and His justice demands payment down to the very last farthing. Unfortunately we all have these sad debts.

No matter how many they may be we should go to God in all confidence and with true sorrow for our sins, saying “Our Father Who art in Heaven, forgive us our sins of thought and those of speech, forgive us our sins of commission and omission which make us infinitely guilty in the eyes of Thy Divine Justice.

“We dare to ask this because Thou art our loving and merciful Father and because we have forgotten those who have offended us, out of obedience to Thee and out of charity.

“Do not permit us, in spite of our infidelity to Thy graces, to give in to the temptations of the world, the devil and the flesh.”

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:

The evil of sin and also of temporal punishment and everlasting punishment which we know that we have rightly deserved.

AMEN (SO BE IT).

This word at the end of Our Father is very consoling and Saint Jerome says that it is a sort of seal of approbation that Almighty God puts at the end of our petitions to assure us that He will grant our requests—very much as though He Himself were answering:

“Amen! May it be as you have asked, for verily you have obtained what you asked for.” This is what is meant by the word “Amen.”

THIRTEENTH ROSE

THE OUR FATHER, PART 2

EACH WORD of the Lord's Prayer is a tribute we pay to the perfections of God. We honor His fertility by the name of Father:

FATHER,
Thou
Who throughout eternity
Dost beget a Son
Who is God like Thee—
Eternal, consubstantial with Thee
WHO Is the very same essence As Thee;
And is of like power
And goodness
And wisdom
As Thou art . . .
Father and Son
Who from Thy mutual love
Produce the Holy Spirit
Who is God like unto Thee;
Three Persons But one GOD.

Our Father—this means that He is the Father of mankind because He has created us and continues to sustain us, and because He has redeemed us. He is also the merciful Father of sinners, the Father Who is the friend of the just and the glorious Father of the blessed in Heaven.

When we say *Who art*, by these words we pay tribute to the infinity and immensity and fullness of God's essence. God is rightly called "He Who is"⁴⁹; that is to say, He exists of necessity, essentially, and eternally, because He is the Being of beings and the cause of all beings. He possesses within Himself, in a supereminent degree, the perfections of all beings and He is in all of them by His essence, by His presence and by His power, but without

being bounded by their limitations. We honor His sublimity and His glory and His majesty by the words *Who art in Heaven*, that is to say, “Who is seated as on a throne, holding sway over all men by Thy justice.”

When we say *hallowed be Thy name* we worship God’s holiness; and we make obeisance to His Kingship and bow to the justice of His laws by the words *Thy Kingdom come*, praying that men will obey Him on earth as the Angels do in Heaven.

We show our trust in His Providence by asking for our *daily bread*, and we appeal to His mercy when we ask for the forgiveness of our sins.

We look to His great power when we beg Him not to *lead us into temptation*, and we show our faith in His goodness by our hope that He will *deliver us from evil*.

The Son of God has always glorified His Father by His works and He came into the world to teach men to give glory to Him. He showed men how to praise Him by this prayer which He taught us with His Own lips. It is our duty, therefore, to say it often—we should say it reverently and attentively and in the spirit in which Our Lord taught it.

FOURTEENTH ROSE

THE OUR FATHER, PART 3

WE MAKE as many acts of the noblest Christian virtues as we pronounce words, when we recite attentively this Divine Prayer.

In saying “*Our Father Who art in Heaven,*” we make acts of faith, adoration and humility. When we ask that *His name be hallowed* and glorified we show a burning zeal for His glory, and when we ask for the spread of His Kingdom we make an act of hope; by the wish that *His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,* we show a spirit of perfect obedience.

In asking for our *daily bread* we practise poverty of spirit and detachment from worldly goods. When we beg Him to *forgive us our sins* we make an act of sorrow for them. By forgiving *those who have trespassed against us* we give proof of the virtue of mercy in its highest degree.

Through asking God’s *help in all our temptations,* we make acts of humility, prudence and fortitude. As we wait for Him to *deliver us from evil* we exercise the virtue of patience.

Finally, while asking for all these things—not for ourselves alone but also for our neighbor and for all members of the Church—we are carrying out our duty as true children of God, we are imitating Him in His love which embraces all men and we are keeping the Commandment of love of neighbor.

If we mean in our hearts what we say with our lips and if our intentions are not at variance with those expressed in the Lord’s Prayer, then, by reciting this prayer, we hate all sin and we observe all of God’s laws. For whenever

we think that God is in Heaven—infinately removed from us by the greatness of His majesty—as we place ourselves in His presence we should be filled with overwhelming reverence. Then the fear of the Lord will chase away all pride and we will bow down before God in our utter nothingness.

When we say the name *Father* and remember that we owe our existence to God by the means of our parents and even our knowledge to our teachers who hold the place and are the living images of God, then we cannot help paying them honor and respect, or, to be more exact, honoring God in them. Nothing then, too, would be farther from our thoughts than to be disrespectful to them or hurt them.

We are never farther from blaspheming than when we pray that the *Holy Name of God may be glorified*. If we really look upon the Kingdom of God as our heritage we cannot possibly be attached to the things of this world.

If we sincerely ask God that our neighbor may have the very same blessings that we ourselves stand in need of, it goes without saying that we will give up all hatred, quarreling and jealousy. And of course if we ask God each day for our *daily bread* we shall learn to hate gluttony and lasciviousness which thrive in rich surroundings.

While sincerely asking God to *forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us* we no longer give way to anger and thoughts of getting even—we return good for evil and really love our enemies.

To ask God to *save us from falling into sin* when we are tempted is to give proof that we are fighting laziness and that we are genuinely seeking means to root out vicious habits and to work out our salvation.

To pray God to *deliver us from evil* is to fear His justice and this will give us true happiness. For since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, it is through the virtue of the fear of God that men avoid sin.

FIFTEENTH ROSE

THE HAIL MARY

THE ANGELIC SALUTATION is so heavenly and so beyond us in its depth of meaning that Blessed Alan de la Roche held that no mere creature could ever possibly understand it, and that only Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary can really explain it.

Its enormous value is due first of all to Our Lady to whom it was addressed, to the purpose of the Incarnation of the Word for which reason this prayer was brought from Heaven, and also to the Archangel Gabriel who was the first ever to say it.

The Angelic Salutation is a most concise summary of all that Catholic theology teaches about the Blessed Virgin. It is divided into two parts, that of praise and petition: the first shows all that goes to make up Mary's greatness and the second all that we need to ask her for and all that we may expect to receive through her goodness.

The Most Blessed Trinity revealed the first part of it to us and the latter part was added by Saint Elizabeth who was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Holy Mother Church gave us the conclusion in the year 430 when she condemned the Nestorian heresy at the council of Ephesus and defined that the Blessed Virgin is truly the Mother of God. At this time she ordered us to pray to Our Lady under this glorious title by saying:

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.”

The greatest event in the whole history of the world was the Incarnation of the Eternal Word by Whom the world was redeemed and peace was restored between God and men. Our Lady was chosen as His instrument for this tremendous event and it was put into effect when she was greeted with the Angelic Salutation. The Archangel Gabriel, one of the leading princes of the heavenly court, was chosen as ambassador to bear these glad tidings.

In the Angelic Salutation can be seen the faith and hope of the patriarchs, the prophets and the Apostles. Furthermore it gives to Martyrs their unswerving constancy and strength, it is the wisdom of the doctors of the Church, the perseverance of holy confessors and the life of all religious. (Blessed Alan de la Roche) It is also the new hymn of the law of grace, the joy of Angels and men, and the hymn which terrifies devils and puts them to shame.

By the Angelic Salutation God became man, a virgin became the Mother of God, the souls of the just were delivered from Limbo, the empty thrones in Heaven filled. In addition sin was forgiven, grace was given to us, sick people were made well, the dead were brought back to life, exiles were brought home, and the anger of the Most Blessed Trinity was appeased and men obtained eternal life.

Finally, the Angelic Salutation is a rainbow in the heavens, a sign of the mercy and grace which God has given to the world. (Blessed Alan da la Roche).

SIXTEENTH ROSE

THE HAIL MARY—BEAUTY

EVEN THOUGH THERE IS nothing so great as the majesty of God and nothing so low as man insofar as he is a sinner, Almighty God does not despise our poor prayers. On the contrary, He is pleased when we sing His praises.

Saint Gabriel's greeting to Our Lady is one of the most beautiful hymns which we can possibly sing to the glory of the Most High. "I will sing a new song to you."⁵⁰ This new hymn which David foretold was to be sung at the coming of the Messiah is none other than the Angelic Salutation.

There is an old hymn and a new hymn: the first is that which the Jews sang out of gratitude to God for creating them and maintaining them in existence—for delivering them from captivity and leading them safely through the Red Sea—for giving them manna to eat and for all His other blessings.

The new hymn is that which Christians sing in thanksgiving for the graces of the Incarnation and the Redemption. As these marvels were brought about by the Angelic Salutation, so also do we repeat the same salutation to thank the Most Blessed Trinity for His immeasurable goodness to us.

We praise God the Father because He so loved the world that He gave us His only Son as our Savior. We bless the Son because He deigned to leave Heaven and came down upon earth—because HE WAS MADE MAN and redeemed us. We glorify the Holy Spirit because He formed Our Lord's pure, Body in Our Lady's Womb—this Body which was the Victim of our sins. In this spirit of deep thankfulness should we, then, always say the Hail

Mary, making acts of faith, hope, love and thanksgiving for the priceless gift of salvation.

Although this new hymn is in praise of the Mother of God and is sung directly to her, nevertheless it greatly glorifies the Most Blessed Trinity because any homage that we pay Our Lady returns inevitably to God Who is the cause of all her virtues and perfections. When we honor Our Lady: God the Father is glorified because we are honoring the most perfect of His creatures; God the Son is glorified because we are praising His most pure Mother, and God the Holy Spirit is glorified because we are lost in admiration at the graces with which He has filled His Spouse.

When we praise and bless Our Lady by saying the Angelic Salutation she always passes on these praises to Almighty God in the same way as she did when she was praised by Saint Elizabeth. The latter blessed her in her most elevated dignity as Mother of God and Our Lady immediately returned these praises to God by her beautiful Magnificat.

Just as the Angelic Salutation gives glory to the Blessed Trinity, it is also the very highest praise that we can give Our Lady.

One day when Saint Mechtilde was praying and was trying to think of some way in which she could express her love of the Blessed Mother better than she had done before, she fell into ecstasy. Our Lady appeared to her with the Angelic Salutation in flaming letters of gold upon her bosom and said to her: “My daughter, I want you to know that no one can please me more than by saying the salutation which the Most Adorable Trinity sent to me and by which He raised me to the dignity of Mother of God.

“By the word *Ave* (which is the name Eve, Eva), I learned that in His infinite power God had preserved me from all sin and its attendant misery which the first woman had been subject to.

“The name *Mary* which means ‘lady of light’ shows that God has filled me with wisdom and light, like a shining star, to light up Heaven and earth.

“The words *full of grace* remind me that the Holy Spirit has showered so many graces upon me that I am able to give these graces in abundance to those who ask for them through me as Mediatrix.

“When people say *The Lord is with thee* they renew the indescribable joy that was mine when the Eternal Word became incarnate in my womb.

“When you say to me *blessed art thou among women* I praise Almighty God’s Divine mercy which lifted me to this exalted plane of happiness.

“And at the words *blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus*, the whole of Heaven rejoices with me to see my Son Jesus Christ adored and glorified for having saved mankind.”

SEVENTEENTH ROSE

THE HAIL MARY—FRUITS

BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the Hail Mary (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment.

The second truth is that those who love this Divine salutation bear the very special stamp of predestination.

The third is that those to whom God has given the signal grace of loving Our Lady and of serving her out of love must take very great care to continue to love and serve her until the time when she shall have had them placed in heaven by her divine Son in the degree of glory which they have earned. (Blessed Alan, chapter XI, paragraph 2)

The heretics, all of whom are children of the devil and clearly bear the sign of God's reprobation, have a horror of the Hail Mary. They still say the Our Father but never the Hail Mary; they would rather wear a poisonous snake around their necks than wear a scapular or carry a rosary.

Among Catholics those who bear the mark of God's reprobation think but little of the rosary (whether that of five decades or fifteen). They either fail to say it or only say it very quickly and in a lukewarm manner.

Even if I did not believe that which has been revealed to Blessed Alan de la Roche, even then my own experience would be enough to convince me of this terrible but consoling truth. I do not know, nor do I see clearly, how it can be that a devotion which seems to be so small can be the infallible sign of eternal salvation and how its absence can be the sign of God's eternal displeasure; nevertheless, nothing could possibly be more true.

In our own day we see that people who hold new doctrines that have been condemned by Holy Mother Church may have quite a bit of surface piety, but they scorn the Rosary, and often dissuade their acquaintances from saying it, by destroying their love of it and their faith in it. In doing this they make elaborate excuses which are plausible in the eyes of the world. They are very careful not to condemn the Rosary and the Scapular as the Calvinists do—but the way they set about attacking them is all the more deadly because it is the more cunning. I shall refer to it again later on.

My Hail Mary, my Rosary of fifteen or of five decades, is the prayer and the infallible touchstone by which I can tell those who are led by the Spirit of God from those who are deceived by the devil. I have known souls who seemed to soar like eagles to the heights by their sublime contemplation and who yet were pitifully led astray by the devil. I only found out how wrong they were when I learned that they scorned the Hail Mary and the Rosary which they considered as being far beneath them.

The Hail Mary is a blessed dew that falls from Heaven upon the souls of the predestinate. It gives them a marvelous spiritual fertility so that they can grow in all virtues. The more the garden of the soul is watered by this prayer the more enlightened one's intellect becomes, the more zealous his heart, and the stronger his armor against his spiritual enemies.

The Hail Mary is a sharp and flaming shaft which, joined to the Word of God, gives the preacher the strength to pierce, move and convert the most hardened hearts even if he has little or no natural gift for preaching.

As I have already said, this was the great secret that Our Lady taught Saint Dominic and Blessed Alan so that they might convert heretics and sinners.

Saint Antoninus tells us that this is why many priests got into the habit of saying a Hail Mary at the beginning of their sermons.

EIGHTEENTH ROSE

THE HAIL MARY—BLESSINGS

THIS HEAVENLY SALUTATION draws down upon us the blessings of Jesus and Mary in abundance, for it is an infallible truth that Jesus and Mary reward in a marvelous way those who glorify them. They repay us a hundred fold for the praises that we give them. “I love them that love Me . . . that I may enrich them that love Me and fill their treasures.”⁵¹ Jesus and Mary have always said: “We love those who love Us; we enrich them and fill their treasuries to overflowing.” “He who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings.”⁵²

Now, if we say the Hail Mary properly, is not this a way to love, bless and glorify Jesus and Mary?

In each Hail Mary we bless both Jesus and Mary: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

By each Hail Mary we give Our Lady the same honor that God gave her when He sent the Archangel Gabriel to greet her for Him. How could anyone possibly think that Jesus and Mary, who often do good to those that curse them, could ever curse those that bless and honor them by the Hail Mary?

Both Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure say that the Queen of Heaven is certainly no less grateful and conscientious than gracious and well-mannered people of this world. Just as she excels in all other perfections, she surpasses us all in the virtue of gratitude; so she would never let us honor her with love and respect without repaying us one hundred fold. Saint

Bonaventure says that Mary will greet us with grace if we greet her with the Hail Mary.

Who could possibly understand the graces and blessings which the greeting and tender regard of Our Lady effect in us? From the very first instant that Saint Elizabeth heard the greeting that the Mother of God gave her, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and the child in her womb leaped for joy. If we make ourselves worthy of the greeting and blessings of Our Lady we shall certainly be filled with graces and a flood of spiritual consolations will come down into our souls.

NINETEENTH ROSE

HAPPY EXCHANGE

IT IS WRITTEN: “Give and it shall be given unto you.”⁵³ To take Blessed Alan’s illustration of this: “Supposing each day I give you one hundred and fifty diamonds, even if you were my enemy, would you not forgive me? Would you not treat me as a friend and give me all the graces that you were able to give? If you want to gain the riches of grace and of glory, salute the Blessed Virgin, honor your good Mother.” “He that honoreth his mother (the Blessed Virgin) is as one that layeth up a treasure.”⁵⁴ So every day do give her at least fifty Hail Marys—for each one is worth fifteen precious stones and they please Our Lady far more than all the riches of this world put together.

And you can expect such great things from her generosity! She is our Mother and our friend. She is the empress of the universe and loves us more than all the mothers and queens of the world have ever loved anyone human being. This is really so, for the charity of the Blessed Virgin far surpasses the natural love of all mankind and even of all the Angels, as Saint Augustine says.

One day Saint Gertrude had a vision of Our Lord counting gold coins. She summoned the courage to ask Him what He was doing. He answered: “I am counting the Hail Marys that you have said; this is the money with which you can pay your way to Heaven.”

The holy and learned Jesuit, Father Suarez, was so deeply aware of the value of the Angelic Salutation that he said that he would gladly give all his learning for the price of one Hail Mary that had been said properly.

Blessed Alan de la Roche said: “Let everyone who loves you, oh most holy Mary, listen to this and drink it in:

Whenever I say

Hail Mary
The court of Heaven rejoices
And the earth
Is lost in wonderment.
And I despise the world
And my heart is brim-full
Of the love of God
When I say Hail Mary;
All my fears
Wilt and die
And my passions are quelled
If I say
Hail Mary;
Devotion grows
Within me
And sorrow for sin
Awakens
When I say
Hail Mary.
Hope is made strong
In my breast
And the dew of consolation
Falls on my soul
More and more—
Because I say
Hail Mary.
And my spirit
Rejoices
And sorrow fades away
When I say
Hail Mary . . .

For the sweetness of this blessed salutation is so great that there are no words to explain it adequately, and even when its wonders have been sung, we still find it so full of mystery and so profound that its depths can never be plumbed. It has but few words but is exceeding rich in mystery; it is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. We should often meditate upon it in our hearts and have it ever upon our lips so as to say it devoutly again and again.”

Blessed Alan says that a nun who had always had great devotion to the Holy Rosary appeared after death to one of her sisters in religion and said to her: “If I were allowed to go back into my body, to have the chance of saying just one single Hail Mary—even if I said it quickly and without great fervor—I would gladly go through the sufferings that I had during my last illness all over again, in order to gain the merit of this prayer.” (Blessed Alan de la Roche, *De Dignitate Psalterii*, Chapter LXIX) This is all the more compelling because she had been bedridden and had suffered agonizing pains for several years before she died.

Michel de Lisle, Bishop of Salubre, who was a disciple and co-worker of Blessed Alan’s in the re-establishment of the Holy Rosary said that the Angelic Salutation is the remedy for all ills that we suffer as long as we say it devoutly in honor of Our Lady.

TWENTIETH ROSE

THE HAIL MARY—EXPLANATION

ARE YOU in the miserable state of sin? Then call on the divine⁵⁵ Mary and say to her: *Ave*, which means “I salute thee with the most profound respect, thou who art without sin” and she will deliver you from the evil of your sins.

Are you groping in the darkness of ignorance and error? Go to Mary and say to her: *Hail Mary*; which means “Hail thou who art bathed in the light of the Sun of Justice”—and she will give you some of her light.

Have you strayed from the path leading to Heaven? Then call on Mary, for her name means “Star of the Sea, the North Star which guides the ships of our souls during the voyage of this life,” and she will guide you to the harbor of eternal salvation.

Are you in sorrow? Turn to Mary, for her name means also “Sea of Bitterness which has been filled with sharp pain in this world but which is now turned into a Sea of the Purest Joy in Heaven” and she will turn your sorrow to joy and your afflictions into consolation.

Have you lost the state of grace? Praise and honor the numberless graces with which God has filled the Blessed Virgin and say to her: *Thou art full of grace* and filled with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and she will give you some of these graces.

Are you all alone, having lost God’s protection? Pray to Mary, and say: “*The Lord is with thee*”—and this union is far nobler and more intimate than that which He has with Saints and the just—because thou art one with Him.

He is thy Son and His Flesh is thy flesh; thou art united to the Lord because of thy perfect likeness to Him and by your mutual love—for thou art His Mother.” And then say to her: “The Three Persons of the Godhead are with thee because thou art the Temple of the Most Blessed Trinity,” and she will place you once more under the protection and care of Almighty God.

Have you become an outcast and have you been accursed by God? Then say to Our Lady: “*Blessed art thou above all women* and above all nations, by thy purity and fertility; thou hast turned God’s maledictions into blessings for us,” and she will bless you.

Do you hunger for the bread of grace and the bread of life? Draw near to her who bore the Living Bread Which came down from Heaven, and say to her: *Blessed be the Fruit of thy womb* Whom thou hast conceived without the slightest loss of thy virginity, Whom thou didst carry without discomfort and to Whom thou didst give birth without pain. Blessed be Jesus Who has redeemed our suffering world when we were in the bondage of sin, Who has healed the world of its sickness, Who has raised the dead to life, brought home the banished, restored sinners to a life of grace and Who has saved men from damnation.” Without doubt, your soul will be filled with the bread of grace in this life and of eternal glory in the next. Amen.

Then, at the end of your prayer, pray thus with Holy Mother Church:

“HOLY MARY

Holy in body and in soul
Holy because of thy incomparable
And eternal devotion
To the service of God—
Holy in thy great rank
Of Mother of God
Who has endowed thee
With eminent holiness,
A worthy attribute
Of this great dignity.

MOTHER OF GOD—

And our Mother—
Our Advocate and Mediatrix
Thou who art the Treasurer of God's graces
And who dost dispense them
As thou seest fit—
Oh, we beg of thee
Obtain for us
Soon
The forgiveness of our sins—
And grant that we may be reconciled
With God's infinite Majesty.

PRAY FOR US, SINNERS—

Thou who art always filled with compassion
For those in need—
Thou who wilt never despise sinners
Or turn them away—
For but for them
Thou wouldst't never have been
Mother of the Redeemer,
Pray for us

NOW,

During this short life
So fraught with sorrow and uncertainty.
Pray for us now,
Now—because we can be sure of nothing
Except the present moment.
Pray for us now
That we are being attacked night and day
By powerful and ruthless enemies . . .
Pray for us now

AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH,

So terrible and full of danger,
When our strength is waning
And our spirits are sinking
And our souls and bodies
Are worn out with fear and pain
Pray for us then
At the hour of our death
When the devil is working
With might and main

To ensnare us and cast us into perdition.
Pray for us
At the turning point
When the die will be cast once and for all
And our lot for ever and ever
Will be Heaven—
Or Hell.
Come to the help of thy poor children,
Gentle Mother of pity:
And, oh, Advocate and Refuge of Sinners,
Protect us
At the hour of our death
And drive far from us
Our bitter enemies,
The devils our accusers,
Those with frightful presence
Fills us with dread.
Light our path
Through the valley of the shadow of death.
Please, Mother
Lead us
To thy Son's
Judgment Seat
And do not forsake us there.
Intercede for us
And ask thy Son to forgive us
And let us into the ranks of the blessed
Thy elect
In the realm of everlasting glory.

AMEN. SO BE IT.”

No one could help admiring the beauty of the Holy Rosary which is made up of two heavenly things: the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation. How could there possibly be any prayers more pleasing to Almighty God and the Blessed Virgin, or any that are easier, more precious or more helpful than these two prayers? We should always have them in our hearts and on our lips to honor the Most Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ our Savior, and His Most Holy Mother.

In addition, at the end of each decade it is very good to add a *Gloria Patri*⁵⁶ . . . that is to say: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy

Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

TWENTY-FIRST ROSE

THE FIFTEEN MYSTERIES

A MYSTERY is a sacred thing which is difficult to understand. The works of Our Lord Jesus Christ are all sacred and Divine because He is God and man at one and the same time. The works of the Most Blessed Virgin are very holy because she is the most perfect and the most pure of God's creatures. The works of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother can be rightly called mysteries because they are so full of wonders and all kinds of perfections and deep and sublime truths which the Holy Spirit reveals to the humble and simple souls who honor these mysteries.

The works of Jesus and Mary can also be called wonderful flowers; but their perfume and beauty can only be appreciated by those who study them carefully—and who open them and drink in their scent by diligent and sincere meditation.

Saint Dominic has divided up the lives of Our Lord and Our Lady into fifteen mysteries which stand for their virtues and their most important actions. These are the fifteen tableaux ; or pictures whose every detail must rule and inspire our lives. They are fifteen flaming torches to guide our steps throughout this earthly life.

They are fifteen shining mirrors which help us to know Jesus and Mary and to know ourselves as well. They will also help light the fire of their love in our hearts.

They are fifteen fiery furnaces which can consume us completely in their heavenly flames.

Our Lady taught Saint Dominic this excellent method of praying and ordered him to preach it far and wide so as to reawaken the fervor of Christians and to revive in their hearts a love for Our Blessed Lord.

She also taught it to Blessed Alan de la Roche and said to him in a vision: “When people say one hundred and fifty Angelic Salutations this prayer is very helpful to them and is a very pleasing tribute to me. But they will do better still and will please me even more if they say these salutations while meditating on the life, death and passion of Jesus Christ—for this meditation is the soul of this prayer.”

For, in reality, the Rosary said without meditating on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would be almost like a body without a soul: excellent matter but without the form which is meditation—this latter being that which sets it apart from all other devotions.

The first part of the Rosary contains five mysteries: the first is the Annunciation of the Archangel Saint Gabriel to Our Lady; the second, the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin Saint Elizabeth; the third, the Nativity of Jesus Christ; the fourth, the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple and the Purification of Our Lady; and the fifth, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple among the doctors.

These are called the JOYFUL MYSTERIES because of the joy which they gave to the whole universe. Our Lady and the Angels were overwhelmed with joy the moment when the Son of God was incarnate. Saint Elizabeth and Saint John the Baptist were filled with joy by the visit of Jesus and Mary. Heaven and earth rejoiced at the birth of Our Savior. Holy Simeon felt great consolation and was filled with joy when he took the Holy Child in his arms. The doctors were lost in admiration and wonderment at the answers which Jesus gave—and how could anyone describe the joy of Mary and Joseph when they found the Child Jesus after He had been lost for three days?

The second part of the Rosary is also composed of five mysteries which are called the SORROWFUL MYSTERIES because they show us Our Lord

weighed down with sadness, covered with wounds, laden with insults, sufferings and torments. The first of these mysteries is Jesus' Prayer and Agony in the Garden of Olives; the second, His Scourging; the third, His Crowning with Thorns; the fourth, Jesus carrying His Cross; and the fifth, His Crucifixion and Death on Mount Calvary.

The third part of the Rosary contains five other mysteries which are called the GLORIOUS MYSTERIES because when we say them we meditate on Jesus and Mary in their triumph and glory. The first is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the second, His Ascension into Heaven; the third, the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles; the fourth, Our Lady's glorious Assumption into Heaven; and the fifth, her Crowning in Heaven.

These are the fifteen fragrant flowers of the Mystical Rose Tree; devout souls fly to them like wise bees, so as to gather their nectar and make the honey of a solid devotion.

TWENTY-SECOND ROSE

LIKENS TO CHRIST

THE CHIEF CONCERN of a Christian soul should be to tend to perfection. Saint Paul tells us “Be ye followers of God, as most dear children.”⁵⁷ This obligation is included in the eternal decree of our predestination, as the one and only means prescribed by God to attain everlasting glory.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa makes a delightful comparison when he says that we are all artists and that our souls are blank canvases which we have to fill in. The colors which we must use are the Christian virtues, and our Model is Jesus Christ, the perfect Living Image of God the Father.

Just as a portrait painter who wants to do a good job places himself before his model and glances at him before making each stroke, so the Christian must always have the life and virtues of Jesus Christ before his eyes so that he may never say, think or do the least thing which is not in harmony with his Model.

It was because Our Lady wanted to help us in the great task of working out our salvation that she ordered Saint Dominic to teach the faithful to meditate upon the sacred mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. She did this, not only that they might adore and glorify Him, but chiefly that they might pattern their lives and actions upon His virtues.

Children copy their parents through watching them and talking to them and they learn their own language through hearing them speak. An apprentice learns his trade through watching his master at work; in the very same way

the faithful members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary can become like their divine Master if they reverently study and imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ which are shown in the fifteen mysteries of His life. They can do this with the help of His grace and through the intercession of His Blessed Mother.

Long ago Moses was inspired by God to command the Jewish people never to forget the graces which had been showered upon them. The Son of God, then, has all the more reason to tell us to engrave the mysteries of His life, passion and death upon our hearts and to have them always before our eyes—because each mystery reminds us of His goodness to us in some special way and it is by these mysteries that He has shown us His overwhelming love and desire for our salvation. Our Lord is saying to us: “Oh, all of you that pass by, pause a while and see if there has ever been sorrow like unto the sorrow which I have undergone for love of you. Be mindful of My poverty and of My humiliations; think of the wine mingled with gall which I drank for you during My bitter passion.”

These words and many others which could be given here should be more than enough to convince us that we must not only say the Rosary with our lips in honor of Our Lord and Our Lady, but also meditate upon the sacred mysteries while we are saying it.

TWENTY-THIRD ROSE

A MEMORIAL

JESUS CHRIST, the Divine Spouse of our souls and our very dear Friend wishes us to remember His goodness to us and all His gifts and wants us to prize them above all else. Whenever we meditate devoutly and lovingly upon the sacred mysteries of the Rosary, Our Lord has an accidental joy and so has Our Lady and all the Saints in Heaven.

These mysteries are the most signal results of Our Lord's love for us and the greatest presents that He could possibly give us, because it is by virtue of such presents that the Blessed Virgin Herself and all the Saints are in their glory in Heaven.

One day Blessed Angela of Foligno begged Our Lord to let her know by which religious exercise she could honor Him best. He appeared to her nailed to His Cross and said: "My daughter, look at My wounds." She then realized that nothing pleases Our dear Lord more than meditation upon His sufferings. Then He showed her the wounds on His head and revealed still other sufferings to her and said: "I have suffered all this for your salvation. What can you ever do to return My love for you?"

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass gives boundless honor to the Most Blessed Trinity because it represents the passion of Jesus Christ and because through the Mass we offer God the merits of Our Lord's obedience, of His sufferings and of His Precious Blood. The whole of the heavenly court also receives an accidental joy from the Mass. Several doctors of the Church—together with Saint Thomas Aquinas—tell us that, for the same reason, all the blessed in Heaven rejoice in the Communion of the faithful because the

Blessed Sacrament is a memorial of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that by means of it men share in its fruits and work out their salvation.

Now, the Holy Rosary, recited together with meditation on the sacred mysteries is a sacrifice of praise to God to thank Him for the great grace of our redemption. It is also a holy reminder of the sufferings, death and glory of Jesus Christ. It is therefore true that the Rosary gives glory, gives an accidental joy to Our Lord, to Our Lady and to all the blessed because they cannot desire anything greater or more contributive to our eternal happiness than to see us engaged in a practice which is so glorious for Our Lord and so salutary for ourselves.

The Gospel teaches us that a sinner who is converted and who does penance gives joy to all the Angels. If the repentance and conversion of one sinner is enough to make the Angels rejoice, how great must be the happiness and jubilation of the whole heavenly court and what glory for Our Blessed Lord Himself to see us here on earth meditating devoutly and lovingly on His humiliations and torments and on His cruel and ignominious death! Could anything possibly touch our hearts more surely than this and be more calculated to inspire us to true and sincere repentance?

A Christian who does not meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary is very ungrateful to Our Lord and shows how little he cares for all that our Divine Savior has suffered to save the world. This attitude seems to show that he knows little or nothing of the life of Jesus Christ, and that he has never taken the trouble to find out about Him—what He did and what He went through in order to save us.

A Christian of this kind ought to fear that having never known Jesus Christ or having put Him out of his mind and heart, He will disown him at the Day of Judgment and will say reproachfully: “Amen I say to you, I know you not.”⁵⁸

Let us, then, meditate on the life and sufferings of Our Lord by means of the Holy Rosary; let us learn to know Him well and to be grateful for all

His blessings so that, at the Day of Judgment, He may number us among His children and His friends.

TWENTY-FOURTH ROSE

MEANS OF PERFECTION

THE SAINTS always made Our Lord's life the principal object of their study; they meditated on His virtues and sufferings and in this way they arrived at Christian perfection.

Once Saint Bernard began this meditation he always continued it.

“At the very beginning of my conversion,” he said, “I made a bouquet of myrrh made up of the sorrows of my Savior. I placed this bouquet upon my heart, thinking of the stripes, the thorns and the nails of His passion. I used all my mental strength to meditate on these mysteries every day.”

This was a practice of the Holy Martyrs too; we know how admirably they triumphed over the most cruel sufferings. Saint Bernard says that the Martyrs' wonderful constancy could have only sprung from one source: their constant meditation on the wounds of Jesus Christ. The Martyrs were Christ's athletes, His champions; while their blood gushed forth and their bodies were wracked with cruel torments, their generous souls were hidden in the wounds of Our Lord. These wounds made them invincible.

During her whole life the Blessed Mother's chief concern was meditation on the virtues and sufferings of her Son. When she heard the Angels sing their hymns of joy at His birth and when she saw the shepherds adore Him in the stable, her heart and mind were filled with wonder and she meditated upon all these marvels.

She compared the greatness of the Word Incarnate to His deep humility and the way He lowered Himself; she thought of Him in His manger filled with

straw and then on His Throne in Heaven and in the bosom of His Eternal Father. She compared the might of God to the weakness of a Baby—and His wisdom to His simplicity.

One day Our Lady said to Saint Bridget: “Whenever I meditated on the beauty, modesty and wisdom of my Son, my heart was filled with joy: and whenever I thought of His hands and feet which would be pierced with cruel nails, I wept bitterly and my heart was rent with sorrow and pain.”

After Our Lord’s ascension Our Blessed Lady spent the rest of her life in visiting the places that had been hallowed by His presence and sufferings. When she was in those places she used to meditate upon His boundless love and upon His terrible passion.

Saint Mary Magdalene did nothing other than religious exercises of this kind during the last thirty years of her life when she lived in the prayerful seclusion of Sainte Baume.⁵⁹

Saint Jerome says that devotion to the Holy Places was widespread among the faithful in the early centuries of the Church. They came to the Holy Land from all corners of Christendom so as to impress a great love and remembrance of their Savior more deeply upon their hearts by seeing the places and things He had made holy by His birth, by His work, by His sufferings and by His death.

All Christians have but one Faith and adore one and the same God, all hoping for the same happiness in Heaven. They have one Mediator Who is Jesus Christ and therefore they must all imitate their Divine Model and in order to do this they must meditate on the mysteries of His life, His virtues and of His glory.

It is a great mistake to think that only priests and religious and those who have withdrawn from the turmoil of the world are supposed to meditate upon the truths of our Faith and the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. If priests and religious have an obligation to meditate on the great truths of our holy religion in order to live up to their vocation worthily, the same obligation, then, is just as much incumbent upon the laity—because of the

fact that every day they meet with spiritual dangers which might make them lose their souls. Therefore they should arm themselves with the frequent meditation on the life, virtues and sufferings of Our Blessed Lord—which are so beautifully contained in the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

TWENTY-FIFTH ROSE

THE WEALTH OF SANCTIFICATION

NEVER WILL ANYONE really be able to understand the marvelous riches of sanctification which are contained in the prayers and mysteries of the Holy Rosary. This meditation on the mysteries of the life and death of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the source of the most wonderful fruits for those who use it.

Today people want things that strike and move and that leave deep impressions on the soul. Nor has there ever been anything in the whole history of the world more moving than the wonderful story of the life, death and glory of Our Savior which is contained in the Holy Rosary. In the fifteen tableaux the chief scenes or mysteries of His life unfold before our eyes. How could there ever be any prayers more wonderful and sublime than the Lord's Prayer and the Salutation of the Angel? All our desires and all our needs are found expressed in these two prayers.

The meditation on the mysteries and the prayers of the Rosary is the easiest of all prayers, because the diversity of the virtues of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the different stages of His life which we study refresh and fortify our mind in a wonderful way and help us to avoid distractions.

For learned people these mysteries are the source of the most profound doctrine but simple people find in them a means of instruction well within their reach.

We must learn this easy form of meditation before progressing to the highest state of contemplation. This is the view of Saint Thomas Aquinas

and the advice that he gives when he says that first of all one must practise on a battlefield, as it were, by acquiring all the virtues which the Holy Rosary gives us to imitate. The learned Cajetan says that this is the way that we reach a really intimate union with God—for without this union contemplation is nothing other than a dangerous illusion which can lead souls astray.

If only the Illuminists or the Quietists⁶⁰ of today had followed this piece of advice they would never have fallen so low nor would they have caused such scandals and upset the devotions of good people. To think that it is possible to say prayers that are finer and more beautiful than the Our Father and the Hail Mary is to fall prey to a strange illusion of the devil.

These heavenly prayers are the support, the strength and the safeguard of our souls—but I must admit that it is not always necessary to say them as vocal prayers. It is quite true that, in a sense, mental prayer is more perfect than vocal prayer, but, believe me, it is really dangerous, not to say fatal, to give up saying the Rosary of your own accord under the excuse of seeking a more perfect union with God.

Sometimes a soul that is proud in a subtle way and who may have done everything that he can do interiorly to rise to the sublime heights of contemplation that the Saints have reached, may be deluded by the noon-day devil into giving up his former devotions because he thinks that he has found a greater good. He then looks upon his erstwhile practices as inferior and only fit for ordinary and mediocre souls.

But this kind of soul has deliberately turned a deaf ear to the prayers and salutation taught us by an Archangel and even to the Prayer which God made and taught us and which He said Himself. “Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father . . .”⁶¹ Having reached this point such a soul drifts from its first illusion into still greater ones and falls from precipice to precipice.

Believe me, dear brothers of the Rosary Confraternity, if you genuinely wish to reach a high level of prayer in all honesty and without falling into

the traps that the devil sets for those who pray, say your whole Rosary every day, or at least five decades of it.

If, by the grace of God, you have already reached a high level of prayer, keep up the practice of saying the Holy Rosary if you wish to remain in that state and if you hope, through it, to grow in humility. For never will anyone who says his Rosary every day become a formal heretic or be led astray by the devil. This is a statement that I would gladly sign with my blood.

On the other hand if Almighty God in His infinite mercy draws you to Him as forcibly as He did some of the Saints while saying the Rosary, make yourself passive in His hands and let yourself be drawn towards Him. Let God work and pray in you and let Him say your Rosary in His way and this will be enough for the day.

But if you are still in the state of active contemplation or the usual prayer of quietude, which is to say that of placing yourself in the presence of God and loving Him, you have every reason in the world not to give up saying your Rosary. Far from making you lose ground in mental prayer or stunting your spiritual growth, it will be the most tremendous help to you. You will find that it will be a real Jacob's ladder with fifteen rungs and by each one of these you will go from virtue to virtue and from light to light. Thus, without danger of being misled, you will easily come to the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ.

TWENTY-SIXTH ROSE

SUBLIME PRAYER

WHATEVER YOU DO, do not be like a certain pious but self-willed lady in Rome, so often referred to when speaking about the Rosary. She was so devout and so fervent that she put to shame by her holy life, even the strictest religious in the Church.

Having decided to ask Saint Dominic's advice about her spiritual life she asked him to hear her confession. For penance he gave her one whole Rosary to say and advised her to say it every day. She said that she had no time to say it, excusing herself on the grounds that she made the Stations⁶² of Rome every day, that she wore sack-cloth and also a hair shirt, that she gave herself the discipline several times a week, that she carried out so many other penances and fasted so much. Saint Dominic urged her over and over again to take his advice and say the Rosary, but she would not hear of it. She left the confessional, horrified at the tactics of this new spiritual director who had tried so hard to persuade her to take on a devotion that was not at all to her liking.

Later on when she was in prayer she fell into ecstasy and had a vision of her soul appearing before Our Lord's Judgment Seat. Saint Michael put all her penances and other prayers onto one balance of the scales and all her sins and imperfections onto the other. The tray of her good works was greatly outweighed by that of her sins and imperfections.

Filled with terror she cried for mercy, imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, her gracious Advocate, who took the one and only Rosary that she had said for her penance and dropped it onto the tray of her good works.

This one Rosary was so heavy that it weighed more than all her sins as well as all her good works. Our Lady then reproved her for having refused to follow the counsel of her servant Dominic and for not saying the Rosary every day.

As soon as she came to herself she rushed and threw herself at the feet of Saint Dominic and told him all that had happened, begged his forgiveness for her unbelief and promised to say the Rosary faithfully every day. By this means she rose to Christian perfection and finally to the glory of everlasting life.

You who are people of prayer—learn from this how tremendous is the power, the value and the importance of this devotion of the Most Holy Rosary when it is said together with meditation on the mysteries.

Few Saints have reached the same heights of prayer as Saint Mary Magdalene who was lifted up to Heaven each day by Angels, and who had had the privilege of learning at the feet of Our Lord Himself and His Blessed Mother. Yet one day when she asked God to show her a sure way of advancing in His love and of arriving at the height of perfection, He sent Saint Michael the Archangel to tell her, on His behalf, that there was no other way for her to arrive at perfection than to meditate on Our Lord's passion. So he placed a Cross in the front of her cave and told her to pray before it, contemplating the Sorrowful Mysteries which she had seen take place with her own eyes.

The example of Saint Francis de Sales, the great spiritual director of his time, should spur you on to join the holy confraternity of the Rosary, since, great Saint that he was, he bound himself by oath to say the whole Rosary every single day as long as he lived.

Saint Charles Borromeo said it every day also and strongly recommended the devotion to his priests and to the ecclesiastics in the seminaries and also to all his people.

Saint Pius V, one of the greatest Popes who have ever ruled the Church, said the Rosary every day. Saint Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of

Valence, Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Francis Borgia, Saint Theresa and Saint Philip Neri as well as many other great men whom I have not mentioned were deeply devoted to the Holy Rosary.

Follow their example; your spiritual directors will be pleased and if they are aware of the benefit that you can derive from this devotion, they will be the very first to urge you to adopt it.

TWENTY-SEVENTH ROSE

BENEFITS

I SHOULD LIKE to give you even more reason for embracing this devotion which so many great souls have practised; the Rosary recited with meditation on the mysteries brings about the following marvelous results:

1. it gradually gives us a perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ;
2. it purifies our souls, washing away sin;
3. it gives us victory over all our enemies;
4. it makes it easy for us to practise virtue;
5. it sets us on fire with love of Our Blessed Lord;
6. it enriches us with graces and merits;
7. it supplies us with what is needed to pay all our debts to God and to our fellow men, and finally, it obtains all kinds of graces for us from Almighty God.

The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the science of Christians and the science of salvation; Saint Paul says that it surpasses all human sciences in value and perfection.⁶³ This is true:

1. because of the dignity of its object, which is a God-man compared to Whom the whole universe is but a drop of dew or a grain of sand;

2. because of its helpfulness to us; human sciences, on the other hand, but fill us with the smoke and emptiness of pride;

3. and finally, because of its utter necessity: for no one can possibly be saved without the knowledge of Jesus Christ—and yet a man who knows absolutely nothing of any of the other sciences will be saved as long as he is illumined by the science of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the Rosary which gives us this science and knowledge of our Blessed Lord through our meditations on His life, death, passion and glory.

The Queen of Saba, lost in admiration at Solomon's wisdom cried out: "Blessed are thy men and blessed are thy servants who stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom."⁶⁴ But far happier still are the faithful who carefully meditate on the life, virtues, suffering and glory of Our Savior, because by this means they can gain the perfect knowledge in which eternal life consists. "This is eternal life."⁶⁵

Our Lady revealed to Blessed Alan that no sooner had Saint Dominic begun preaching the Rosary than hardened sinners were touched and wept bitterly over their grievous sins. Young children performed incredible penances and everywhere that he preached the Holy Rosary such fervor arose that sinners changed their lives and edified everyone by their penances and change of heart.

If by chance your conscience is burdened with sin, take your Rosary and say at least part of it, honoring some of the Mysteries of the life, passion or glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and be sure that, while you are meditating upon these Mysteries and honoring them He will show His sacred wounds to His Father in Heaven. He will plead for you and will obtain for you contrition and the forgiveness of your sins.

One day Our Lord said to Blessed Alan: "If only these poor wretched sinners would say My Rosary, they would share in the merits of My passion and I would be their Advocate and would appease My Father's Justice."

This life is nothing but warfare and a series of temptations; we do not have to contend with enemies of flesh and blood but with the very powers of Hell. What better weapons could we possibly use to combat them than the Prayer which our great Captain taught us, and the Angelic Salutation which has chased away devils, destroyed sin and renewed the world? What better weapon could we use than meditation on the life and passion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? For, as Saint Peter says, it is with this thought we must arm ourselves in order to defend ourselves against the very same enemies which he conquered and which molest us every day.”⁶⁶

“Ever since the devil was crushed by the humility and passion of Jesus Christ he has been very nearly unable to attack a soul that is armed with meditation on the mysteries of Our Lord’s life, and, if he does trouble such a soul, he is sure to be shamefully defeated.” (Cardinal Hughes.)

“Put you on the armor of God.”⁶⁷ So arm yourselves with the arms of God—with the Holy Rosary—and you will crush the devil’s head and you will stand firm in the face of all his temptations. This is why even the material rosary itself is such a terrible thing for the devil, and why the Saints have used it to enchain devils and to chase them out of the bodies of people who were possessed. Such happenings are reported in more than one authentic record.

Blessed Alan said that a man he knew of had desperately tried all kinds of devotions to rid himself of the evil spirit who possessed him, but without success. Finally he thought of wearing his Rosary around his neck, which eased him considerably. He discovered that whenever he took it off the devil tormented him cruelly, so he resolved to wear it night and day. This drove the evil spirit away forever, because he could not bear such a terrible chain. Blessed Alan also testified that he had delivered a large number of people who were possessed by putting the Rosary around their necks.

Father Jean Amat, of the Order of St. Dominic, was giving a series of Lenten sermons in the Kingdom of Aragon one year, when a young girl was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. After he had exorcised her several times without success he put his rosary around her neck. Hardly had

he done so than the girl began to scream and yell in a fearful way, shrieking: “Take them off! Take them off! These beads are torturing me!” At last the Father, filled with pity for the girl, took his rosary off her.

The very next night when Father Amat was in bed, the same devils who had possession of the girl came to him foaming with rage and tried to seize him. But he had his rosary clasped in his hand and no efforts of theirs could wrench it from him. He managed to beat them with it very well indeed and chased them away, crying out: “Holy Mary, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, come to my help!”

The next day when he went to the Church he met the poor girl—still possessed—and one of the devils within her started to laugh and said in a mocking voice: “Well, Brother, if you had been without your rosary, we should have made short shrift of you!” Then the good Father threw his rosary around the girl’s neck without more ado and said: “By the sacred name of Jesus and that of Mary His Holy Mother, and by the power of the Most Holy Rosary I command you, evil spirits, to leave the body of this girl,” and they were immediately forced to obey and she was delivered from them.

These stories show the power of the Holy Rosary in overcoming all possible temptations that evil spirits may bring—and also all kinds of sin—because these blessed beads put devils to rout.

TWENTY-EIGHTH ROSE

SALUTARY EFFECTS

SAINT AUGUSTINE says quite emphatically that there is no spiritual exercise more fruitful or more useful to our salvation than continually turning our thoughts to the sufferings of Our Savior.

Blessed Albert the Great who had Saint Thomas Aquinas as his disciple learned in a revelation that by simply thinking of or meditating on the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a Christian gains more merit than if he had fasted on bread and water every Friday for a whole year, or had beaten himself with his discipline once a week until the blood flowed, or had recited the whole Book of Psalms every day. If this is so, then how great must be the merit that we can gain by the Holy Rosary which commemorates the whole life and passion of Our Savior!

One day Our Lady revealed to Blessed Alan that, after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the most important as well as the living memorial of Our Blessed Lord's passion there could not possibly be a finer devotion or one of greater merit than that of the Holy Rosary, which is like a second memorial and representation of the life and passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father Dorland says that in 1481 Our Lady appeared to Venerable Dominic, the Carthusian, who lived at Treves, and said to him: "Whenever one of the faithful who is in a state of grace says the Rosary while meditating on the mysteries of the life and passion of Jesus Christ, he obtains full and entire remission of all his sins."

Our Lady also said to Blessed Alan: “I want you to know that, although there are numerous indulgences already attached to the recitation of my Rosary, I shall add many more to every fifty Hail Marys (each group of five decades) for those who say them devoutly, on their knees—being, of course, free from mortal sin. And whosoever shall persevere in the devotion of the Holy Rosary, saying these prayers and meditations, shall be rewarded for it; I shall obtain for him full remission of the penalty and of the guilt of all his sins at the end of his life. Do not be unbelieving, as though this is impossible. It is easy for me to do because I am the Mother of the King of Heaven, and He calls me full of grace. And, being full of grace, I am able to dispense grace freely to my dear children.”

Saint Dominic was so convinced of the efficacy of the Holy Rosary and of its great value that, when he heard confessions, he hardly ever gave any other penance. You have seen an example of this already in the story that I told you of the lady in Rome to whom he gave one single Rosary for her penance. Saint Dominic was a great Saint and other confessors should be sure to walk in his footsteps by asking their penitents to say the Rosary together with meditation on the sacred mysteries, rather than giving them other penances which are less meritorious and less pleasing to God, less likely to help them advance in virtue and not as efficacious as the Rosary for helping them avoid falling into sin. Moreover, while saying the Rosary, people gain countless indulgences which are not attached to many other devotions.

And, as Abbe Blossius says: “The Rosary, with meditation on the life and passion of Jesus Christ, is certainly most pleasing to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother and is a very successful means of obtaining all graces; we can say it for ourselves as well as for others for whom we wish to pray and for the whole Church. Let us turn, then, to the Holy Rosary in all our needs, and we shall infallibly obtain the graces we ask of God to save our souls.”

TWENTY-NINTH ROSE

MEANS OF SALVATION

SAINT DENIS said that there is nothing more noble and more pleasing to God than to cooperate in the work of saving souls and to frustrate the devil's plans for ruining them. The Son of God came down to earth for no other reason than to save souls.

He upset Satan's empire by founding the Church, but the former rallied his strength and wreaked cruel violence on souls by the Albigensian heresy, by the hatred, dissensions, and abominable vices which he spread throughout the world in the XIth, XIIth and XIIIth centuries.

Only stringent measures could possibly cure such terrible disorders and repel Satan's forces. The Blessed Virgin, Protectress of the Church, has given us a most powerful means for appeasing her Son's anger, uprooting heresy and reforming Christian morals, in the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. It has proved its worth for it has brought back charity and frequent reception of the Sacraments which flourished in the first golden centuries of the Church and it has reformed Christian morals.

Pope Leo X said in his Bull that this Confraternity had been founded in honor of God and of the Blessed Virgin as a wall to hold back the evils that were going to break upon the Church.

Gregory XIII said that the Rosary was given us from Heaven as a means of appeasing God's anger and of imploring Our Lady's intercession.

Jules III said that the Rosary was inspired by God in order that Heaven might be more easily opened to us through the favors of Our Lady.

Paul III and Saint Pius V stated that the Rosary was given to the faithful in order that they might have spiritual peace and consolation more easily. Surely everyone will want to join a confraternity which was founded for such noble purposes.

Father Dominic, the Carthusian, who was deeply devoted to the Holy Rosary, had this vision: Heaven was opened for him to see and the whole heavenly court was assembled in magnificent array. He heard them sing the Rosary in an enchanting melody and each decade was in honor of a mystery of the life, passion or glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother. Father Dominic noticed that whenever they said the sacred name of Mary they bowed their heads and at the name of Jesus they genuflected and gave thanks to God for the great good that He had wrought in Heaven and on earth through the Holy Rosary, which the Confraternity members say here on earth. He noticed too that they were praying for those who practise this devotion. He also saw beautiful crowns without number which were made of gorgeous perfumed flowers held in readiness for those who say the Holy Rosary devoutly. He learned that by every Rosary that they say they make a crown for themselves which they will be able to wear in Heaven.

This holy Carthusian's vision is very much like that which Saint John the Beloved Disciple had. He had a vision of a very great multitude of Angels and Saints who continually praised and blessed Our Savior Jesus Christ for all that He had done and suffered on earth for our salvation. This is precisely what the devout members of the Rosary Confraternity do.

It must not be thought that the Rosary is only for women and for simple and ignorant people; it is also for men and for the greatest of men. As soon as Saint Dominic acquainted Pope Innocent III with the fact that he had received a command from Heaven to establish the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary, the Holy Father gave it his full approval, urged Saint Dominic to preach it and said that he wished to become a member himself. Many Cardinals embraced the devotion with great fervor too, which prompted Lopez to say: "Neither sex nor age nor any other condition has kept anyone from devotion to the Holy Rosary."

Members of the Confraternity have always been from all walks of life: dukes, princes, kings, as well as prelates, cardinals and Sovereign Pontiffs; it would take too long to give all their names in this little book, which is but a summary. If you join the Confraternity, dear reader, you will share in the devotion of your fellow members and in the graces that they gain on earth as well as in their glory in heaven. “Since you are united to them in their devotion you will share in their dignity.”

THIRTIETH ROSE

CONFRATERNITY PRIVILEGES⁶⁸

IF THE VALUE of a confraternity and the advisability of joining it are to be judged by the indulgences attached to it, then it can surely be said that the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary is by far the most valuable one and that the faithful should be strongly urged to join it.

This is because it has been awarded more indulgences than any other confraternity in the Church, and ever since its inception there has hardly been a Pope who has not opened up the Treasures of the Church to enrich it with further privileges.

Knowing that a good example is more compelling than glowing words and even favors, Sovereign Pontiffs have found that there was no better way to show their high regard for the confraternity than to join it themselves.

Here is a short summary of the indulgences which they wholeheartedly granted to the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary and which were confirmed again by our Holy Father Pope Innocent XI on July 31, 1679 and received and made public on September 25th of the same year by His Excellency the Archbishop of Paris:

1. Members may gain a plenary indulgence on the day of joining the confraternity;
2. A plenary indulgence at the hour of death;
3. For each three groups of Five Mysteries recited: ten years and ten quarantines;

4. Each time that members say the holy names of Jesus and Mary devoutly: seven days' indulgences;

5. Seven years and seven quarantines may be gained by those who devoutly take part in or attend the Holy Rosary Procession;

6. Members who have made a good confession and who are genuinely sorry for their sins may gain a plenary indulgence on certain days by visiting the Holy Rosary Chapel in the Church where the Confraternity is established. This plenary indulgence can be gained on the First Sunday of every month, and on the feasts of Our Lord and Our Lady.

7. For assisting at the Salve Regina⁶⁹ one hundred days' indulgence;

8. Those who openly wear the Holy Rosary out of devotion and to set a good example may gain one hundred days' indulgence;

9. Sick members who are not able to go to Church may gain a plenary indulgence by going to confession and receiving Holy Communion and by saying that day the whole Rosary if possible, or at least five decades;

10. Our Sovereign Pontiffs have shown their generosity towards members of the Rosary Confraternity by allowing them to gain the indulgences attached to the Stations of Rome by visiting five altars in the Church where the Rosary Confraternity is established, and by saying the Our Father and Hail Mary five times before each altar, for the happy estate of the Church. If there are only one or two altars in the Confraternity Church they should recite the Our Father and Hail Mary twenty-five times before one of them.

This is a wonderful favor granted to Confraternity members for in the Stational Churches in Rome plenary indulgences can be gained, souls can be delivered from Purgatory and many other great indulgences too can be gained by members with very little effort and no expense and without leaving their own country. And even if the Confraternity is not established in the place where the members live they can gain the very same indulgences by visiting five altars in any Church. This concession was granted by Leo X.

The Sacred Congregation of Indulgences drew up a list of certain definite days upon which those outside the city of Rome could gain the Indulgences of the Stations of Rome. The Holy Father approved this list on March 7th, 1678, and commanded that it be strictly observed. These indulgences can be gained on the following days:

All the Sundays of Advent; each of the three Ember Days; also Christmas Eve, at Midnight Mass, the Daybreak Mass and at the Third Mass; the feast of Saint Stephen; that of Saint John the Evangelist; the feast of the Holy Innocents; the Circumcision and the Epiphany; the Sundays of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima and on every single day from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday inclusively; each of the three Rogation Days; Ascension Day; the Vigil of Pentecost; every day during the octave; and on each of the three September Ember Days.

Dear Confraternity members, there are numerous other indulgences which you can gain. If you want to know about them look up the complete list of indulgences which have been granted to members of the Rosary Confraternity. You will see the names of the Popes in question, the years in which they granted the indulgences and many other particulars which I have not been able to include in this little summary.

THIRTY-FIRST ROSE

BLANCHE OF CASTILLE—ALPHONSUS VIII

BLANCHE OF CASTILLE, Queen of France, was deeply grieved because twelve years after her marriage she was still childless. When Saint Dominic went to see her he advised her to say her Rosary every day to ask God for the grace of motherhood, and she faithfully carried out his advice. In 1213 she gave birth to her eldest child, Philip, but the child died in infancy.

The Queen's fervor was nowise dulled by this disappointment; on the contrary, she sought Our Lady's help more than ever before. She had a large number of Rosaries given out to all members of the court and also to people in several cities of the Kingdom, asking them to join her in entreating God for a blessing that this time would be complete. Thus, in 1215, Saint Louis was born—the prince who was to become the glory of France and the model of all Christian kings.

Alphonsus VIII, King of Aragon and Castille, had been leading a disorderly life and therefore had been punished by God in several ways, one of these being that he was worsted in battle and had to take refuge in a city belonging to one of his allies.

Saint Dominic happened to be in this city on Christmas Day and preached on the Holy Rosary as he always did, pointing out how great are the graces that we can obtain through it. He mentioned, among other things, that those who said the Rosary devoutly would overcome their enemies and would regain all that they had lost in warfare.

The King listened attentively and sent for Saint Dominic to ask if what he had said about the Rosary was really true. Saint Dominic assured him that nothing was more true, and that if only he would practise this devotion and join the Confraternity, he would see for himself. The King firmly resolved to say his Rosary every day and persevered for a year in doing so. The very next Christmas Our Lady appeared to him at the end of his Rosary and said: “Alphonsus, you have served me for a year by saying my Rosary devoutly every day, so I have come to reward you: I have obtained the forgiveness of your sins from my Son. And I am going to give you this rosary; wear it, and I promise you that none of your enemies will ever be able to harm you again.”

Our Lady vanished leaving the King overjoyed and greatly encouraged; he immediately went in search of the Queen to tell her all about Our Lady’s gift and the promise that went with it. He held the rosary to her eyes (she had been blind for some time) and her sight was instantly restored.

Shortly afterwards the King rallied some troops with the help of his allies and boldly attacked his enemies. He forced them to give back the territory that they had taken from him and to make amends for their other offences against him, and put them completely to rout. In fact, he became so lucky in war that soldiers rushed from all sides to fight under his standard because it seemed that whenever he went to battle the victory was sure to be his.

This is not surprising because he never went to battle without first saying his Rosary devoutly on his knees. He made certain that all the members of his court joined the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary and he also saw that his officers and servants were devoted to it.

The Queen joined the Confraternity and started saying the Rosary too, and she and her husband persevered in Our Lady’s service and lived really holy lives.

THIRTY-SECOND ROSE

DON PEREZ

SAINT DOMINIC had a cousin named Don Perez, or Pedro, who was leading a highly immoral life. When he heard that his cousin was preaching on the wonders of the Rosary and learned that several people had been converted and had amended their lives by means of it, he said:

“I had given up all hope of being saved but now I am beginning to take heart again. I really must hear this man of God.” So one day he went to hear one of Saint Dominic’s sermons. When the latter caught sight of him he struck out against sin more zealously than ever before, and from the depths of his heart he besought Almighty God to enlighten his cousin and to let him see what a deplorable state his soul was in.

At first Don Perez was somewhat alarmed, but he still did not resolve to change his ways. He came once more to hear Saint Dominic preach and his cousin, realizing that a heart as hard as his could only be moved by something quite out of the ordinary, cried out with a loud voice: “Oh Lord Jesus, grant that this whole congregation may actually see the state of the man who has just come into Your House.”

Then everybody suddenly saw that Don Perez was completely surrounded by a band of devils in the form of hideous beasts who were holding him in great iron chains. People fled hither and thither in abject terror and Don Perez himself was even more appalled than they when he saw how everyone shunned him.

Saint Dominic told them all to stand still and said to his cousin: “Unhappy man that you are, acknowledge the deplorable state you are in and throw yourself at Our Lady’s feet. Take this Rosary; say it with devotion and with true sorrow for all your sins, and make a firm resolution to amend your life.”

So Don Perez knelt down and said the whole Rosary; he then felt the need of making his confession and did so with heart-felt contrition. Saint Dominic ordered him to say the Rosary every day; he promised to do so and he entered his name on the Rosary Confraternity list in his own hand.

When he left the Church his face was no longer horrible to behold but had a glow like that of an Angel’s. Thereafter he persevered in devotion to the Holy Rosary, led a well-ordered Christian life and died a happy death.

THIRTY-THIRD ROSE

A DIABOLICAL POSSESSION

WHEN SAINT DOMINIC was preaching the Rosary near Carcassone ⁷⁰ an Albigensian was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. Saint Dominic exorcised him in the presence of a great crowd of people; it appears that over twelve thousand had come to hear him preach. The devils who were in possession of this wretched man were forced to answer Saint Dominic's questions in spite of themselves. They said that:

1. There were fifteen thousand of them in the body of this poor man, because he had attacked the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary;
2. They went on to testify that by preaching the Rosary he put fear and horror into the very depths of Hell and that he was the man they hated most throughout the whole world, because of the souls which he snatched from them through devotion to the Holy Rosary;
3. They then revealed several other things.

Saint Dominic put his Rosary around the Albigensian's neck and asked the devils to tell him who, of all the Saints in Heaven, was the one they feared the most, and who should therefore be the most loved and revered by men. At this they let out such unearthly screams that most of the people fell to the ground, faint from fear. Then, using all their cunning, so as not to answer, the devils wept and wailed in such a pitiful way that many of the people wept also, out of purely natural pity. The devils spoke through the mouth of the Albigensian, pleading in a heartrending voice:

“Dominic, Dominic, have mercy on us—we promise you that we will never hurt you. You have always had compassion for sinners and those in distress; have pity on us, for we are in grievous straits. We are suffering so very much already, so why do you delight in heightening our pains? Can’t you be satisfied with our suffering without adding to it? Have pity on us! Have pity on us!”

Saint Dominic was not one whit moved by the pathos of these wretched spirits and told them that he would not let them alone until they had answered his question. Then they said they would whisper the answer in such a way that only Saint Dominic would be able to hear. The latter firmly insisted upon their answering clearly and out loud. Then the devils kept quiet and refused to say another word, completely disregarding Saint Dominic’s orders—so he knelt down and prayed thus to Our Lady: “Oh, all powerful and wonderful Virgin Mary, I implore you by the power of the Most Holy Rosary, order these enemies of the human race to answer me.”

No sooner had he made this prayer than a glowing flame leaped out of the ears, nostrils and mouth of the Albigenian. Everyone shook with fear, but the fire did not hurt anyone. Then the devils cried:

“Dominic, we beseech you, by the passion of Jesus Christ and by the merits of His Holy Mother and of all the Saints, let us leave the body of this man without speaking further—for the Angels will answer your question whenever you wish. After all, are we not liars? So why should you want to believe us? Please don’t torture us any more; have pity on us.”

“Woe unto you wretched spirits, who do not deserve to be heard,” Saint Dominic said, and kneeling down he prayed to Our Lady:

“Oh most worthy Mother of Wisdom, I am praying for the people assembled here who have already learned how to say the Angelic Salutation properly. Please, I beg of you, force your enemies to proclaim the whole truth and nothing but the truth about this, here and now, before the multitude.”

Saint Dominic had hardly finished this prayer when he saw the Blessed Virgin near at hand, surrounded by a multitude of Angels. She struck the possessed man with a golden rod that she held and said: "Answer my servant Dominic at once." (Remember, the people neither saw nor heard Our Lady, but only Saint Dominic.) Then the devils started screaming:

"Oh you who are our enemy, our downfall and our destruction, why have you come from Heaven just to torture us so grievously? O Advocate of sinners, you who snatch them from the very jaws of Hell, you who are the very sure path to Heaven, must we, in spite of ourselves, tell the whole truth and confess before everyone who it is who is the cause of our shame and our ruin? Oh woe unto us, princes of darkness:

"Then listen well, you Christians: the Mother of Jesus Christ is all-powerful and she can save her servants from falling into Hell. She is the Sun which destroys the darkness of our wiles and subtlety. It is she who uncovers our hidden plots, breaks our snares and makes our temptations useless and ineffectual.

"We have to say, however reluctantly, that not a single soul who has really persevered in her service has ever been damned with us; one single sigh that she offers to the Blessed Trinity is worth far more than all the prayers, desires and aspirations of all the Saints.

"We fear her more than all the other Saints in Heaven together and we have no success with her faithful servants. Many Christians who call upon her when they are at the hour of death and who really ought to be damned according to our ordinary standards are saved by her intercession.

"Oh if only that Mary (it is thus in their fury that they called her) had not pitted her strength against ours and had not upset our plans, we should have conquered the Church and should have destroyed it long before this; and we would have seen to it that all the Orders in the Church fell into error and disorder.

"Now that we are forced to speak we must also tell you this: nobody who perseveres in saying the Rosary will be damned, because she obtains for her

servants the grace of true contrition for their sins and by means of this they obtain God's forgiveness and mercy."

Then Saint Dominic had them all say the Rosary very slowly and with great devotion, and a wonderful thing happened: at each Hail Mary that he and the people said together a large group of devils issued forth from the wretched man's body under the guise of red-hot coals.

When the devils had all been expelled and the heretic was at last entirely free of them, Our Lady (who was still invisible) gave her blessing to the assembled company, and they were filled with joy because of this.

A large number of heretics were converted because of this miracle and joined the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary.

THIRTY-FOURTH ROSE

SIMON DE MONTFORT, ALAN DE LANVALLAY AND OTHÈRE

IT IS ALMOST impossible to do real credit to the victories that Count Simon de Montfort won against the Albigensians under the patronage of Our Lady of the Rosary. These victories are so famous that the world has never seen anything to match them. One day he defeated ten thousand heretics with a force of five hundred men and on another occasion he overcame three thousand with only thirty men. Finally, with eight hundred horsemen and one thousand infantrymen he completely put to rout the army of the King of Aragon which was a hundred thousand strong, and this with the loss on his side of only one horseman and eight soldiers!

Our Lady also protected Alan de Lanvallay, a Breton Knight, from great perils. He too was fighting for the Faith against the Albigensians. One day when he found himself surrounded by enemies on all sides Our Lady let fall one hundred and fifty rocks upon his enemies and he was delivered from their hands. Another day when his ship foundered and was about to sink, the Blessed Mother caused one hundred and fifty small hills to appear miraculously above the water and by means of them they reached Brittany in safety.

He built a monastery at Dinan for the religious of St. Dominic, in thanksgiving to Our Lady for all the miracles that she had worked on his behalf in answer to his daily Rosary. Having become a religious himself he died a holy death at Orleans.

Othère was also a Breton soldier, from Vaucouleurs, and he often put whole companies of heretics or robbers to flight unaided, wearing his Rosary on his arm or carrying it on the hilt of his sword. Once when he had beaten them his enemies admitted that they had seen his sword gleam and that another time they had noticed a shield on his arm which had pictures of Our Lord and Our Lady and the Saints upon it. This shield made him invisible and gave him the strength to attack well.

Another time he defeated twenty thousand heretics with only ten companies and without losing a single man. This so impressed the general of the heretics' army that he came to see Othère afterwards, abjured his heresy and declared publicly that he had seen him surrounded by flaming swords during the battle.

THIRTY-FIFTH ROSE

CARDINAL PIERRE

BLESSED ALAN says that a certain Cardinal Pierre, whose titular Church was that of St. Mary-beyond-the-Tiber, was a great friend of Saint Dominic's and had learned from him a deep devotion to the Most Holy Rosary. This resulted in his loving it so much that he never ceased singing its praises and encouraging everyone he met to embrace it.

Eventually he was sent as Legate to the Holy Land to the Christians who were fighting the Saracens. So successfully did he convince the Christian army of the power of the Rosary that they started saying it one and all to storm Heaven for help in a battle in which they knew they would be pitifully out-numbered. This resulted in victory for them, and three thousand Christians triumphed over an enemy of one hundred thousand.

As we have seen, the devils have an overwhelming fear of the Rosary. Saint Bernard says that the Angelic Salutation puts them to flight and makes all Hell tremble.

Blessed Alan says that he has seen several people delivered from Satan's bondage after taking up the Holy Rosary, even though they had previously sold themselves to him in body and soul by renouncing their Baptismal Vows and their allegiance to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THIRTY-SIXTH ROSE

FREED FROM SATAN

IN 1578 A WOMAN in Anvers had given herself to the devil and had signed the contract with her own blood. Shortly afterwards she was stricken with sincere remorse and had an intense desire to make amends for this terrible deed. So she sought out a kind and wise confessor who advised her to go to Father Henry, one of the Fathers of the Dominican Friary, who was Director of the Rosary Confraternity in that town, to ask him to enroll her in it and hear her confession.

Accordingly she went to ask for him but met, not Father Henry, but the devil disguised as a Dominican Father. The latter scolded her pitilessly and said that she could never hope to receive Almighty God's grace again as long as she lived, and that there was absolutely no way in which she could regain possession of her contract. This grieved her greatly but she did not quite lose hope of God's mercy and sought out Father Henry once more, only to find the devil a second time, and to meet with a second rebuff. She came back for the third time and then at last, by Divine Providence, she found Father Henry in person—the priest whom she had been looking for—and he treated her with very great kindness, urging her to throw herself upon the mercy of Almighty God and to make a good confession. He then received her into the Confraternity and told her to say the Rosary frequently.

One day while Father Henry was saying Mass for her Our Lady forced the devil to give her back the contract which she had signed. In this way she was delivered from the devil by the authority of Mary and by her devotion to the Most Holy Rosary.

THIRTY-SEVENTH ROSE

A MONASTERY REFORMED

A NOBLEMAN who had several daughters entered one of them in a lax monastery where the nuns were very proud and thought of nothing else but worldly pleasures. The nuns' confessor, on the other hand, was a zealous priest and had a great love for the Holy Rosary. Wishing to guide this nun into a better way of life he ordered her to say the Rosary every day in honor of the Blessed Virgin while meditating on the life, passion and glory of Jesus Christ.

She joyously undertook to say the Rosary and little by little she grew to have a repugnance for the wayward habits of her sisters in religion. She developed a love for silence and prayer and this in spite of the fact that the others despised and ridiculed her and called her a fanatic. It was at this time that a holy priest, who was making the visitation of the convent, had a strange vision while he was making his meditation: he saw a nun in her room, rapt in prayer, kneeling in front of a Lady of breathless beauty who was surrounded by Angels. The latter had flaming spears with which they repelled a crowd of devils who wanted to come in. These evil spirits then fled to the other nuns' rooms under the guise of vile animals.

By this vision the priest became aware of the lamentable state the monastery was in and he was so upset that he thought he might almost die of grief. He immediately sent for the young religious and exhorted her to persevere.

As he pondered on the value of the Rosary, he decided to try to reform the sisters by means of it. He bought a supply of beautiful rosaries and gave

one to each nun, imploring them to say the Rosary every day, even going so far as to promise them that, if they would only say it faithfully, he would not try to force them to alter their lives. Wonderful and strange as it may seem the nuns agreed to this pact and were glad to be given the rosaries and promised to say them.

Little by little they began to give up their empty and worldly pursuits, letting silence and recollection come into their lives. In less than a year they all asked that the monastery be reformed.

So the Holy Rosary worked more changes in their hearts than the priest could have worked by exhorting and commanding them.

THIRTY-EIGHTH ROSE

A BISHOP'S DEVOTION

A SPANISH COUNTESS, who had been taught the Holy Rosary by Saint Dominic, used to say it faithfully every day with the result that she was making wonderful strides in her spiritual life. Since her one and only thought was how she might attain to perfection she asked a Bishop who was a renowned preacher for some practices that would help her become perfect.

The Bishop told her that, before he could give her any counsels, she would have to let him know the state of her soul and also what her religious exercises were. She answered that her most important exercise was the Holy Rosary which she said every day meditating on the Joyous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries, and that her soul was greatly helped by so doing.

The Bishop was overjoyed to hear her explain what priceless lessons the mysteries contain. "I have been a Doctor of Theology for twenty years," he exclaimed "and I have read many excellent books on various devotional practices. But never before have I come across one better than this—for it is of the essence of Christianity and is a devotion which cannot but bear fruit. I shall follow your example, and from now on I shall preach the Rosary."

The Bishop's preaching met with great success, for in almost no time his diocese changed for the better. There was a notable decline in immorality and worldliness of all kinds as well as in gambling. There were several striking instances of people being brought back to the Faith, or sinners making restitution for their crimes and of others sincerely resolving to give up lives of vice. Religious fervor and Christian charity began to flourish.

These changes were all the more remarkable because this Bishop had been striving to reform his diocese for some time but with hardly any results.

To better inculcate devotion of the Rosary, the Bishop also wore a beautiful Rosary at his side and always showed it to the congregation when he preached. He used to say:

“My dear brethren in Jesus Christ, I am a Doctor of Theology and a Doctor of Canon as well as Civil law, but I say to you, as your Bishop, that I take more pride in wearing Our Lady’s Rosary than in any of my episcopal regalia or academic robes.”

THIRTY-NINTH ROSE

A PARISH TRANSFORMED

A DANISH PRIEST used to love to tell how the very same improvement that the Spanish Bishop noticed in his diocese had occurred in his own parish. He always told his story with great rejoicing of soul because it gave such glory to Almighty God. He said:

“I had preached as compellingly as I could, touching on many aspects of our Holy Faith, and using every argument I could possibly think of to get the people to amend their way of life. But in spite of all my efforts they went unconcernedly about their way as before; and it was then that I decided to preach the Holy Rosary.

“I told my congregations how precious it is and I taught them how to say it. I kept on preaching the Holy Rosary and the devotion took root in the parish. Six months later I was overjoyed to see that people had really changed for the better. How true it is that this God-given prayer has Divine power—the power to touch our hearts and to fill them with horror of sin and the love of virtue!”

One day Our Lady said to Blessed Alan: “Just as Almighty God chose the Angelic Salutation to bring about the Incarnation of His Word and the Redemption of mankind, in the same way those who want to bring about moral reforms and who want people reborn in Jesus Christ must honor me and greet me with the same salutation. I am the channel by which God came to men, and so, next to my Son Jesus Christ, it is through me that men must obtain grace and virtue.”

I, who write this, have learned from my own experience that the Rosary has the power to convert even the most hardened hearts. I have known people who have gone to missions and who have heard sermons on the most terrifying subjects without being in the least moved; and yet, after they had, on my advice, started to say the Rosary every day they eventually became converted and gave themselves completely to God. When I have gone back again to visit parishes where I have given missions I have seen a tremendous difference in them; in those parishes where people had given up the Rosary they had generally fallen back into their sinful ways again, whereas in places where the Rosary was said faithfully I found the people were persevering in the grace of God and were advancing each day in virtue.

FORTIETH ROSE

ADMIRABLE EFFECTS

BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE, Father Jean Dumont, Father Thomas, the chronicles of Saint Dominic and other writers who have seen these things with their own eyes speak of the marvelous conversions that are brought about by the Holy Rosary. Great sinners—both men and women—have been converted after twenty, thirty or even forty years of sin and unspeakable vice, because they persevered in saying the Holy Rosary. And these have been people who, beforehand, had been deaf to all pleading! I shall not tell you about those wonderful conversions here because I do not want to make this book too long. And I am not even going to refer to those which I have seen with my very own eyes: there are several reasons why I would rather not talk about them.

Dear reader, I promise you that if you practise this devotion and help to spread it you will learn more from the Rosary than from any spiritual book. And what is more, you will have the happiness of being rewarded by Our Lady in accordance with the promises that she made to Saint Dominic, to Blessed Alan de la Roche and to all those who practise and encourage this devotion which is so dear to her. For the Holy Rosary teaches people about the virtues of Jesus and Mary, and leads them to mental prayer and to imitate Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It teaches them to approach the Sacraments often, to genuinely strive after Christian virtues and to do all kinds of good works, as well as interesting them in the many wonderful indulgences which can be gained through the Rosary.

People are often quite unaware of how rich the Rosary is in indulgences. This is because many priests, when preaching on the Rosary, hardly ever

mention indulgences and give rather a flowery and popular sermon which excites admiration but scarcely teaches anything.

Be that as it may I shall say no more than to assure you, in the words of Blessed Alan de la Roche, that the Holy Rosary is the root and the storehouse of countless blessings. For through the Holy Rosary:

1. Sinners are forgiven;
2. Souls that thirst are refreshed;
3. Those who are fettered have their bonds broken;
4. Those who weep find happiness;
5. Those who are tempted find peace;
6. The poor find help;
7. Religious are reformed;
8. Those who are ignorant are instructed;
9. The living learn to overcome pride;
10. The dead (the Holy Souls) have their pains eased by suffrages.

One day Our Lady said to Blessed Alan:

“I want people who have a devotion to my Rosary to have my Son’s grace and blessing during their lifetime and at their death, and after their death I want them to be freed from all slavery so that they will be like kings wearing crowns and with sceptres in their hands and enjoying eternal glory.” Amen. So be it.

HOW TO RECITE IT

FORTY-FIRST ROSE

PURITY OF INTENTION

IT IS NOT SO much the length of a prayer, but the fervor with which it is said which pleases Almighty God and touches His Heart. One single Hail Mary that is said properly is worth more than one hundred and fifty that are badly said. Most Catholics say the Rosary, the whole fifteen mysteries or five of them anyway or, at least a few decades. So why is it then that so few of them give up their sins and go forward in the spiritual life? Surely it must be because they are not saying them as they should. It is a good thing to think over how we should pray if we really want to please God and become more holy.

To say the Holy Rosary to advantage one must be in a state of grace or at the very least be fully determined to give up mortal sin. This we know because all our theology teaches us that good works and prayers are only dead works if they are done in a state of mortal sin. Therefore they can neither be pleasing to God nor help us gain eternal life. This is why Ecclesiastes says: "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner."⁷¹ Praise of God and the salutation of the Angel and the very Prayer of Jesus Christ are not pleasing to God when they are said by unrepentant sinners.

Our Lord said: "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."⁷² It is as though He was saying: "Those who join My Confraternity and say their Rosary every day (even perhaps the fifteen decades), but without being sorry for their sins offer Me lip service only and their hearts are far from Me."

I have just said that to say the Rosary to advantage one must be in a state of grace “or at least be fully determined to give up mortal sin;” first of all, because, if it were true that God only heard the prayers of those in a state of grace it would follow that people in a state of mortal sin should not pray at all. This is an erroneous teaching which has been condemned by Holy Mother Church, because of course sinners need to pray far more than good people do. Were this horrible doctrine true it would then be useless and futile to tell a sinner to say all, or even part of his Rosary, because it would never help him.

Secondly, because if they join one of Our Lady’s confraternities and recite the Rosary or some other prayer, but without having the slightest intention of giving up sin, they join the ranks of her false devotees. These presumptuous and impenitent devotees, hiding under her mantle, wearing the scapular and with rosary in hand, cry out: “Blessed Virgin, good Mother—Hail, Mary! . . .” And yet at the same time, by their sins, they are crucifying Our Lord Jesus Christ and tearing His flesh anew. It is a great tragedy, but from the very ranks of Our Lady’s most holy Confraternities souls are falling into the fires of Hell.

We earnestly beg everyone to say the Holy Rosary: the just that they may persevere and grow in God’s grace; the sinners that they may rise from their sins. But God forbid that we should ever encourage a sinner to think that Our Lady will protect him with Her mantle if he continues to love sin, for then it will only turn into a mantle of damnation which will hide his sins from the public eye. The Rosary, which is a cure for all our ills, would then be turned into deadly poison. “A corruption of what is best is worst.”

The learned Cardinal Hughes says: “One should really be as pure as an Angel to approach the Blessed Virgin and to say the Angelic Salutation.” One day Our Lady appeared to an immoral man who used to always say his Rosary every day. She showed him a bowl of beautiful fruit, but the bowl itself was covered with filth. The man was horrified to see this, and Our Lady said: “This is the way you are honoring me! You are giving me beautiful roses in a filthy bowl. Do you think I can accept presents of this kind?”

FORTY-SECOND ROSE

WITH ATTENTION

IN ORDER TO pray well, it is not enough to give expression to our petitions by means of that most excellent of all prayers, the Rosary, but we must also pray with real concentration for God listens more to the voice of the heart than that of the mouth. To be guilty of willful distractions during prayer would show a great lack of respect and reverence; it would make our Rosaries fruitless and would make us guilty of sin.

How can we expect God to listen to us if we ourselves do not pay attention to what we are saying? How can we expect Him to be pleased if, while in the presence of His tremendous Majesty, we give in to distractions just as children run after butterflies? People who do this forfeit Almighty God's blessings which are then changed into curses because they have been praying disrespectfully. "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully."⁷³

Of course, you cannot possibly say your Rosary without having a few involuntary distractions and it is hard to say even one Hail Mary without your imagination troubling you a little (for our imagination is, alas, never still). The one thing you can do, however, is to say your Rosary without giving in to distractions deliberately and you can take all sorts of precautions to lessen involuntary distractions and to control your imagination.

With this in mind put yourself in the presence of God and imagine that Almighty God and His Blessed Mother are watching you and that your guardian Angel is standing at your right hand, taking your Hail Marys, if

they are well said, and using them like roses to make crowns for Jesus and Mary. But remember that at your left hand lurks the devil ready to pounce upon every Hail Mary that comes his way and to write it down in his deadly note-book. And be sure that he will snatch every single one of your Hail Marys that you have not said attentively, devoutly and with reverence.

Above all, do not forget to offer up each decade in honor of one of the mysteries and while you are saying it try to form a picture in your mind of Jesus and Mary in connection with this mystery.

The life of Blessed Hermann (of the Premonstratensian Fathers) tells us that at one time when he used to say the Rosary attentively and devoutly while meditating upon the mysteries Our Lady used to appear to him resplendent in breathtaking majesty and beauty. But as time went on his fervor cooled and he fell into the way of saying his Rosary hurriedly and without giving it his full attention.

Then one day Our Lady appeared to him again—only this time she was far from beautiful and her face was furrowed and drawn with sadness. Blessed Hermann was appalled at the change in her, and then Our Lady explained:

“This is how I look to you, Hermann, because in your soul this is how you are treating me; as a woman to be despised and of no importance. Why do you no longer greet me with respect and attention meditating on my mysteries and praising my privileges.”

FORTY-THIRD ROSE

FIGHTING DISTRACTIONS

WHEN THE ROSARY is well said it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and it is more meritorious for the soul than any other prayer. But it is also the hardest prayer to say well and to persevere in, owing especially to the distractions which almost inevitably attend the constant repetition of the same words.

When we say the Little Office of Our Lady, or the Seven Penitential Psalms, or any prayers other than the Rosary, the variety of words and expressions keeps us alert, prevents our imagination from wandering, and so makes it easier for us to say them well. On the contrary, because of the constant repetition of the same Our Father and Hail Mary in the same unvarying form, it is difficult, while saying the Rosary, not to become wearied and inclined to sleep or to turn to other prayers that are more refreshing and less tedious. This goes to show that one needs much greater devotion to persevere in saying the Holy Rosary than in saying any other prayer, even the Psalms of David.

Our imagination, which is hardly still a minute, makes our task harder and then of course there is the devil who never tires of trying to distract us and keep us from praying. To what ends does not the evil one go against us while we are engaged in saying our Rosary against him.

Being human, we easily become tired and slipshod—but the devil makes these difficulties worse when we are saying the Rosary. Before we even begin he makes us feel bored, distracted or exhausted—and when we have started praying he oppresses us from all sides. And when, after much

difficulty and many distractions, we have finished, he whispers to us: “What you have just said is worthless. It’s useless for you to say the Rosary. You had better get on with other things. It’s only a waste of time to pray without paying attention to what you’re saying; half an hour’s meditation or some spiritual reading would be much better. Tomorrow when you’re not feeling so sluggish you’ll pray better; don’t finish your Rosary until tomorrow.” By tricks of this kind the devil gets us to give up the Rosary altogether or else hardly say it at all, and we keep putting it off or else change to some other devotion.

Dear Rosary Confraternity members, do not listen to the devil, but be of good heart even if your imagination has been bothering you throughout your Rosary, filling your mind with all kinds of distracting thoughts—as long as you really tried hard to get rid of them as soon as they came. Always remember that the best Rosary is the one with the most merit, and there is more merit in praying when it is hard than when it is easy. Prayer is all the harder when it is (naturally speaking) distasteful to the soul and is filled with those annoying little ants and flies running about in your imagination, against your will, and scarcely allowing you the time to enjoy a little peace and appreciate the beauty of what you are saying.

Even if you have to fight distractions all through your whole Rosary be sure to fight well, arms in hand: that is to say, do not stop saying your Rosary even if it is hard to say and you have absolutely no sensible devotion. It is a terrible battle, I know, but one that is profitable to the faithful soul. If you put down your arms, that is, if you give up the Rosary, you will be admitting defeat and then, having won, the devil will leave you alone.

But at the Day of Judgment he will taunt you because of your faithlessness and lack of courage. “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.”⁷⁴ He who fights even the smallest distractions faithfully when he says even the very smallest prayer he will also be faithful in great things. We can be absolutely certain of this because the Holy Spirit has told us so.

So all of you, servants and handmaids of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, who have made up your minds to say the Rosary every day, be of good heart. Do not let the flies (it is thus that I call the distractions that make war on you during prayer) make you cowardly abandon the company of Jesus and Mary, in whose holy presence you always are when saying the Rosary. In what follows I shall give you suggestions for getting rid of distractions.

FORTY-FOURTH ROSE

A GOOD METHOD

WHEN YOU have asked the Holy Spirit to help you pray well, put yourself for a moment in the presence of God and offer up the decades in the way that I am going to show you later.

Before beginning a decade, pause for a moment or two—depending upon how much time you have—and contemplate the mystery that you are about to honor in that decade. Always be sure to ask of Almighty God, by this mystery and through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, one of the virtues that shines forth most in this mystery or one of which you stand in particular need.

Take great care to avoid the two pitfalls that most people fall into during the Rosary. The first is the danger of not asking for any graces at all, so that if some people were asked their Rosary intention they would not know what to say. So, whenever you say your Rosary, be sure to ask for some special grace. Ask God's help in cultivating one of the great Christian virtues or in overcoming one of your sins.

The second big fault a lot of people make when saying the Holy Rosary is to have no intention other than that of getting it over as quickly as possible! This is because so many of us look upon the Rosary as a burden which is always heavier when we have not said it—especially if it is weighing on our conscience because we have promised to say it regularly or have been told to say it as a penance more or less against our will.

It is really pathetic to see how most people say the Holy Rosary—they say it astonishingly fast and mumble so that the words are not properly pronounced at all. We could not possibly expect anyone, even the most unimportant person, to think that a slipshod address of this kind was a compliment and yet we expect Jesus and Mary to be pleased with it! Small wonder then that the most sacred prayers of our holy religion seem to bear no fruit, and that, after saying thousands of Rosaries, we are still no better than we were before! Dear Confraternity members, I beg of you to temper the speed which comes all too easily to you and pause briefly several times as you say the Our Father and Hail Mary. I have placed a cross at each pause, as you will see:

Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art thou among women and blessed is the Fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

At first, you may find it difficult to make these pauses because of your bad habit of saying prayers in a hurry; but a decade that you say recollectedly in this way will be worth more than thousands of Rosaries said all in a rush—without any pauses or reflection.

Blessed Alan de la Roche and other writers (including Saint Robert Bellarmine) tell the story of how a good confessor advised three of his penitents, who happened to be sisters, to say the Rosary every day without fail for a whole year. This was so that they might make beautiful robes of glory for Our Lady out of their Rosaries. This was a secret that the priest had received from Heaven.

So the three sisters said the Rosary faithfully for a year and on the Feast of the Purification the Blessed Virgin appeared to them at night when they had

retired. Saint Catherine and Saint Agnes were with her and she was wearing beautiful robes that shone and all over them “Hail Mary, full of grace” was blazoned in letters of gold. The Blessed Mother came to the eldest sister and said “I salute you, my daughter, because you have saluted me so often and beautifully. I want to thank you for the beautiful robes that you have made me.” The two virgin Saints who were with Our Lady thanked her too and then all three of them vanished.

An hour later Our Lady and the same two Saints appeared, to them again, but this time she was wearing green which had no gold lettering and did not gleam. She went up to the second sister and thanked her for the robes she had made Her by saying her Rosary. Since this sister had seen Our Lady appear to the eldest much more magnificently dressed she asked Her the reason for the change. The Blessed Mother answered: “Your sister made Me more beautiful clothes because she has been saying her Rosary better than you.”

About an hour after this she appeared to the youngest of the sisters wearing tattered and dirty rags. “My daughter” she said “I want to thank you for these clothes that you have made Me. The young girl was covered with shame and she called out: “Oh, my Queen, how could I have dressed you so badly! I beg you to forgive me. Please grant me a little more time to make you beautiful robes by saying my Rosary better .” Our Lady and the two Saints vanished, leaving the girl heartbroken. She told her confessor everything that had happened and he urged her to say her Rosary for another year and to say it more devoutly than ever.

At the end of this second year on the very same day of the Purification, Our Lady, clothed in a magnificent robe and attended by Saint Catherine and Saint Agnes, wearing crowns, appeared to them again in the evening. She said to them: “My daughters, I have come to tell you that you have earned Heaven at last—and you will all have the great joy of going there tomorrow.” The three of them cried:

“Our hearts are all ready, dearest Queen; our hearts are all ready.” Then the vision faded. That same night they became ill and so sent for their confessor

who brought them the Last Sacraments and they thanked him for the holy practice that he had taught them. After Compline Our Lady appeared with a multitude of virgins and had the three sisters clothed in white gowns. While Angels were singing “Come, spouses of Jesus Christ, receive the crowns which have been prepared for you for all eternity,” they departed from this life.

Some very deep truths can be learned from this story:

1. How important it is to have a good director who will counsel holy practices, especially that of the Most Holy Rosary;
2. How important it is to say the Rosary attentively and devoutly;
3. How kind and merciful the Blessed Mother is to those who are sorry for the past and are firmly resolved to do better;
4. And finally, how generous she is in rewarding us in life, death and eternity, for the little services that we render Her faithfully.

FORTY-FIFTH ROSE

WITH REVERENCE

I WOULD like to add that the Rosary ought to be said reverently—that is to say it ought to be said, as far as possible, kneeling, with the hands joined and clasping the Rosary. However, if people are ill they can of course say it in bed or if they are traveling it can be said on foot—and if infirmity prevents people kneeling it can be said seated or standing. The Rosary can even be said at work, if people's daily duties keep them at their jobs, because the work of one's hands is not by any means always incompatible with vocal prayer.

Of course, since the soul has its limitations and can only do so much, when we are concentrating on manual work we cannot give our undivided attention to things of the spirit, such as prayer. But when we cannot do otherwise this kind of prayer is not without value in Our Lady's eyes and she rewards our good will more than our external actions.

I advise you to divide up your Rosary into three parts and to say each group of mysteries (five decades) at a different time of day. This is much better than saying the whole fifteen decades all at once.

If you cannot find the time to say a third part of the Rosary all at one time, say it gradually, a decade here and there. I am sure you can manage this; so that, in spite of your work and all the calls upon your time, you will have said the whole Rosary before going to bed.

Saint Francis de Sales sets us a very good example of faithfulness in this respect: once when he was quite exhausted from the visits of the day and

remembered, towards midnight, that he had left a few decades of his Rosary unsaid, he would not go to bed until he had finished them on his knees, notwithstanding all the efforts of his secretary who saw he was tired and begged him to let the rest of his prayers go until the next day.

And do let me remind you just once more to copy the faithfulness, reverence and devotion of the holy friar who is mentioned in the Chronicles of Saint Francis and who always said his Rosary very devoutly and reverently before dinner. (I have told this story earlier in this book, THE SEVENTH ROSE.)

FORTY-SIXTH ROSE

GROUP RECITATION

THERE ARE SEVERAL ways of saying the Holy Rosary, but that which gives Almighty God the greatest glory, does the most for our souls and which the devil fears more than any other, is that of saying or chanting the Rosary publicly in two groups.

Almighty God is very pleased to have people gathered together in prayer; the angels and the blessed unite to praise Him unceasingly. The just on earth in several communities join in communal prayer night and day. Our Blessed Lord expressly recommended common prayer to His Apostles and disciples and promised that whenever two or three were gathered together in His name He would be there in the midst of them. (Cf. Matt. 18:20)

What a wonderful thing to have Jesus Christ in our midst! And the only thing we have to do to get Him to come is to say the Rosary in a group.⁷⁵ This is why the early Christians often gathered together to pray in spite of all the Roman Emperor's persecutions and the fact that assemblies were forbidden. They preferred to risk the danger of death rather than to miss their gatherings, at which Our Lord was present.

This way of praying is of the greatest benefit to our souls because:

1. Normally our minds are far more alert during public prayer than they are when we pray alone.
2. When we pray in common, the prayer of each one belongs to us all and these make but one great prayer together, so that if one person is not praying well, someone else in the same gathering who prays better may

make up for his deficiency. In this way those who are strong uphold the weak, those who are fervent inspire the lukewarm, the rich enrich the poor, the bad are counted as good. How can a measure of cockle be sold? This can be done very easily by mixing it up with four or five barrels of good wheat.

3. Somebody who says his Rosary alone only gains the merit of one Rosary, but if he says it together with thirty other people he gains the merit of thirty Rosaries. This is the law of public prayer. How profitable, how advantageous this is!

4. Urban VIII, who was very pleased to see how devotion to the Holy Rosary had spread in Rome and how it was being said in two groups or choirs, particularly at the convent of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, attached one hundred days' extra indulgence, *toties quoties*, whenever the Rosary was said in two choirs. This was set out in his brief "Ad perpetuam rei memoriam," written in the year 1626. So every time you say the Rosary in two groups you gain one hundred days' extra indulgence.

5. Public prayer is far more powerful than private prayer to appease the anger of God and call down His Mercy and Holy Mother Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, has always advocated public prayer in times of public tragedy and suffering.

In his bull on the Rosary, Pope Gregory XIII says very clearly that we must believe (on pious faith) that the public prayers and processions of members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary were largely responsible for the great victory over the Turkish navy at Lepanto which Almighty God granted to Christians on the first Sunday of October, 1571.

When King Louis the Just, of blessed memory, was besieging La Rochelle, where the revolutionary heretics had their stronghold, he wrote to his mother to beg her to have public prayers offered for a victorious outcome. The Queen-Mother decided to have the Rosary recited publicly in Paris in the Dominican Church of Faubourg Saint Honore and this was done by the Archbishop of Paris. It was begun on May 20th, 1628.

Both the Queen-Mother and the reigning Queen attended the recitation of the Rosary together with the Duke of Orleans, Cardinal de La Rochefoucault and Cardinal de Berulle, as well as other prelates. The court turned out in full force as well as a large proportion of the general populace. The Archbishop used to read the meditations on the mysteries aloud and then begin the Our Fathers and Hail Marys of each decade while the congregation made up of religious and lay folk answered him. At the end of the Rosary a statue of the Blessed Mother was solemnly carried in procession while the Litany of Our Lady was sung.

This devotion was kept up with admirable fervor every Saturday and resulted in a manifest blessing from Heaven: for on All Saints' Day of the same year the king defeated the English at the island of Re and made his triumphant entry into La Rochelle. This goes to show the great power of public prayer.

Finally, when people say the Rosary together it is far more formidable to the devil than one said privately, because in this public prayer it is an army that is attacking him. He can often overcome the prayer of an individual, but if this prayer is joined to that of other Christians, the devil has much more trouble in getting the best of it. It is very easy to break a single stick, but if you join it to others to make a bundle it cannot be broken. "In union there is strength." Soldiers join together in an army to overcome their enemies; wicked people often get together for parties of debauchery and dancing, and evil spirits join forces in order to make us lose our souls. So why, then, should not Christians join forces to have Jesus Christ present with them when they pray, to appease Almighty God's anger, to draw down His grace and mercy upon us, and to frustrate and overcome the devil and his Angels more forcefully?

Dear Rosary Confraternity members, whether you live in town or in the country, near your parish Church or near a chapel, go there at least every evening (with the parish priest's approval, of course), together with all those who want to recite the Rosary in two choirs. If a Church or a chapel is not available say the Rosary together in your own or a neighbor's house. This is a holy practice which Almighty God, in His mercy, has set up in places

where I have preached missions—to safeguard and increase the good brought about by these missions and to prevent further sin.

Before the Holy Rosary took root in these small towns and villages, dances and parties of debauchery went on all the time; dissoluteness, wantonness, blasphemy, quarrels and feuds flourished. One heard nothing but evil songs and double-meaning talk. But now nothing is heard but hymns and the chant of the Our Father and Hail Mary. The only gatherings to be seen are those of twenty, thirty or a hundred or more people who, at a fixed hour, sing Almighty God's praises just as religious do. There are even places where the Rosary is recited in common—five mysteries at a time—at three special times every day. What a blessing from Heaven this is!

Just as there are wicked people everywhere, do not expect to find that the place you live in is free of them; there will be some who will be certain to avoid coming to Church for the Rosary and they may even make fun of it and will probably do everything in their power to stop you from going, exerting their influence by bad example and bad language. But do not give up. As these wretched souls will have to be separated from God and Heaven for all eternity because their place will be in Hell, already here on earth they have to be separated from the company of Christ Our Lord and His servants and hand-maids.

FORTY-SEVENTH ROSE

PROPER DISPOSITIONS

PREDESTINATE SOULS, you who are of God, cut yourselves adrift from those who are damning themselves by their impious lives, laziness and lack of devotion—and, without delay, recite often your Rosary, with faith, with humility, with confidence and with perseverance.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, told us to follow His example and to pray always—because of our endless need of prayer, the darkness of our minds, our ignorance and weakness and because of the strength and number of our enemies. Anyone who really gives heed to this Our Master’s commandment will surely not be satisfied with saying the Rosary once a year (as the Perpetual Members do) or once a week (like the Ordinary Members) but will say it every day (as a member of the Daily Rosary) and will never fail in this—even though the only obligation he has is that of saving his own soul.

1. “We ought always to pray and not to faint.”⁷⁶ These are the eternal words of our Blessed Lord Himself. And we must believe His words and abide by them if we do not want to be damned. You can understand them in any way you like, as long as you do not interpret them as the world does and only observe them in a worldly way.

Our Lord gave us the true explanation of His words—by means of the example He left us. “I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you do also.”⁷⁷ And “He passed the whole night in the prayer of God.”⁷⁸ As though His days were not long enough, He used to spend the night in prayer. Over and over again He said to His Apostles: “Watch ye

and pray”;⁷⁹ the flesh is weak, temptation is everywhere and always around you. If you do not keep up your prayers, you shall fall . . . And because some of them evidently thought that these words of Our Lord constituted a counsel only they completely missed their point. This is why they fell into temptation and sin, even though they were in the company of Jesus Christ.

Dear Rosary Confraternity members, if you want to lead a fashionable life and belong to the world—by this I mean if you do not mind falling into mortal sin from time to time and then going to Confession, and if you wish to avoid conspicuous sins which the world considers vile and yet at the same time commit “respectable sins”—then, of course, there is no need for you to say so many prayers and Rosaries. You only need to do very little to be “respectable”: a tiny prayer at night and morning, an occasional Rosary which may be given to you for your penance, a few decades of Hail Marys said on your Rosary (but haphazardly and without concentration) when it suits your fancy to say them—this is quite enough. If you did less, you might be branded as a freethinker or a profligate; if you did more, you would be eccentric and a fanatic. But if you want to lead a true Christian life and genuinely want to save your soul and walk in the saints’ footsteps and never, never, fall into mortal sin—if you wish to break Satan’s traps and divert his flaming darts, you must always pray as Our Lord taught and commanded you to do.

If you really have this wish at heart, then you must at least say your Rosary or the equivalent, every day. I have said “at least” because probably all that you will accomplish through your Rosary will be to avoid mortal sin and to overcome temptation. This is because you are exposed to the strong current of the world’s wickedness by which many a strong soul is swept away; you are in the midst of the thick, clinging darkness which often blinds even the most enlightened souls; you are surrounded by evil spirits who being more experienced than ever and knowing that their time is short are more cunning and more effective in tempting you.

It will indeed be a marvel of grace wrought by the Most Holy Rosary if you manage to keep out of the clutches of the world, the devil and the flesh and avoid mortal sin and gain Heaven! If you do not want to believe me, at least

learn from your own experience. I should like to ask you if, when you were in the habit of saying no more prayers than people usually say in the world and saying them the way they usually say them, you were able to avoid serious faults and sins that were grievous but which seemed nothing much to you in your blindness. Now at last you must wake up, and if you want to live and die without sin, at least mortal sin, pray unceasingly; say your Rosary every day as members always used to do in the early days of the Confraternity.

When our Blessed Lady gave the Holy Rosary to Saint Dominic she ordered him to say it every day and to get others to say it daily. Saint Dominic never let anyone join the Confraternity unless he were fully determined to say it every day. If today people are allowed to be Ordinary Members by saying the Rosary merely once a week, it is because fervor has dwindled, and charity has grown cold. You get what you can out of one who is poor in prayer. "It was not thus in the beginning."

Three things must be stressed here; the first is that if you want to join the Confraternity of the Daily Rosary and share in the prayers and merits of its members, it is not enough to be enrolled in the Ordinary Rosary or just to make a resolution to say it every day; as well as doing this you must give your name to those who have the power to enroll you in it. It is also a very good thing to go to Confession and Holy Communion especially for this intention. The reason for this is that the Ordinary Rosary Membership does not include that of the Daily Rosary, but this latter does include the former.

The second point I want to make is that, absolutely speaking, it is not even a venial sin to fail to say the Rosary every day, or once a week, or even once a year.

The third point is that whenever illness, or work that you have performed out of obedience to a lawful superior or some real necessity, or even involuntary forgetfulness has prevented you from saying your Rosary, you do not forfeit your share in the merits and your participation in the Rosaries of the other Confraternity members. So, absolutely speaking, you are under no obligation to say two Rosaries the next day to make up for the one you

missed, as I understand it, through no fault of your own. If, however, when you are ill, your sickness is such that you are still able to say part of your Rosary, you must say that part.

“Blessed are (those) who stand before thee always.”⁸⁰ “Happy they who dwell in your house! Continually they praise you.”⁸¹ “Oh, dear Lord Jesus, blessed are the brothers and sisters of the Daily Rosary Confraternity who are in Thy presence every day—in Thy little home at Nazareth, at the foot of Thy Cross on Calvary, and around Thy throne in Heaven, so that they may meditate and contemplate Thy Joyous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries. How happy they are on earth because of the wonderful graces that Thou dost vouchsafe to them, and how blessed they shall be in Heaven where they will praise Thee in a very special way—for ever and ever!”

2. The Rosary should be said with faith—for our Blessed Lord said “Believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you.”⁸² If you believe that you will receive what you ask from the hands of Almighty God, He will grant your petitions. He will say to you: “As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee.”⁸³ “If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God—but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”⁸⁴ If anyone needs wisdom, let him ask God with faith, and without hesitating, and through his Rosary—and what he asks shall be given him.

3. Thirdly, we must pray with humility, like the publican; he was kneeling on the ground—on both knees—not on one knee as proud and worldly people do, or with one knee on the bench in front of him. He was at the back of the Church and not in the sanctuary as the Pharisee was; his eyes were cast down, as he dared not look up to Heaven; he did not hold his head up proudly and look about him like the Pharisee. He beat his breast, confessing his sins and asking forgiveness: “Be merciful to me a sinner”⁸⁵ and he was not in the least like the Pharisee who boasted of his good works and who despised others in his prayers. Do not imitate the pride of the Pharisee whose prayer only hardened his heart and increased his guilt; imitate rather the humility of the Publican whose prayer obtained for him the remission of his sins.

You should be very careful not to do anything out of the ordinary nor to ask nor even wish for knowledge of extraordinary things, visions, revelations or other miraculous graces which Almighty God has occasionally given to a few of the Saints while they were reciting the Rosary. “Faith alone suffices”: faith alone is quite enough for us now that the Holy Gospels and all the devotions and pious practices are firmly established.

Even if you suffer from dryness of soul, boredom and interior discouragement, never give up even the least little bit of your Rosary—for this would be a sure sign of pride and faithlessness. On the contrary, like a real champion of Jesus and Mary, you should say your Our Fathers and Hail Marys quite drily if you have to, without seeing, hearing or feeling any consolation whatsoever, and concentrating as best you can on the mysteries. You ought not to look for candy or jam to eat with your daily bread, as children do—but you should even say your Rosary more slowly sometimes when you particularly find it hard to say. Do this to imitate Our Lord more perfectly in His agony in the garden: “Being in an agony, He prayed the longer,”⁶ so that what was said of Our Lord (when He was in His agony of prayer) may be said of you too: He prayed even longer.

4. Pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray. The Eternal Father yearns for nothing so much as to share the life-giving waters of His grace and mercy with us. He is entreating us: “All you that thirst, come to the waters . . .”⁸⁷ This means “Come and drink of My spring through prayer,” and when we do not pray to Him He sorrowfully says that we are forsaking Him: “They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water.”⁸⁸

We make Our Lord happy when we ask Him for graces and if we do not ask, He makes a loving complaint: “Hitherto you have not asked anything . . . ask and you shall receive . . . seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.”⁸⁹

Furthermore, to give us more confidence in praying to Him, He has bound Himself by a promise: that His Eternal Father would grant us everything that we ask in His name.

FORTY-EIGHTH ROSE

PERSEVERANCE

5. As a fifth point I must add also perseverance in prayer. Only he will receive, will find and will enter who perseveres in asking, seeking and knocking. It is not enough to ask Almighty God for certain graces for a month, a year, ten or even twenty years; we must never tire of asking. We must keep on asking until the very moment of death, and even in this prayer which shows our trust in God, we must join the thought of death to that of perseverance and say: “Although he should kill me, I will trust in Him”⁹⁰ and will trust Him to give me all I need.

Prominent and rich people of the world show their generosity by foreseeing people’s wants and ministering to them, even before they are asked for anything. On the other hand, God’s munificence is shown in His making us seek and ask for, over a long period of time, the grace which He wishes to give us and quite often the more precious the grace, the longer He takes to grant it. There are three reasons why He does this:

1. To thus increase this grace still more:
2. To make the recipient more deeply appreciate it;
3. To make the soul who receives it very careful indeed not to lose it—for people do not appreciate things that they can get quickly and with very little trouble.

So, dear members of the Rosary Confraternity, persevere in asking Almighty God for all your needs, both spiritual and corporal, through the Most Holy Rosary. Most of all you should ask for Divine Wisdom which is

an infinite Treasure: “(Wisdom) is an infinite treasure”⁹¹ and there can be no possible doubt that you will receive it sooner or later—as long as you do not stop asking for it and do not lose courage in the middle of your journey. “Thou hast yet a great way to go.”⁹² This means that you have a long way to go, there will be bad times to weather, many difficulties to overcome and many enemies to conquer before you will have stored up enough treasures of eternity, enough Our Fathers and Hail Marys with which to buy your way to Heaven and earn the beautiful crown which is waiting for each faithful Confraternity member.

“(Let) no man take thy crown”:⁹³ take care that your crown is not stolen by somebody who has been more faithful than you in saying the Holy Rosary. It is “thy crown”—Almighty God has chosen it for you and you have already won it halfway by means of the Rosaries that you have said well. Unfortunately someone else may get ahead of you in the race—someone who has worked harder and who has been more faithful might possibly win the crown that ought to be yours, paying for it by his Rosaries and good works. All this could really happen if you stand still on the beautiful path where you have been running so well: “You did run well.”⁹⁴ “Who hath hindered you?”⁹⁵ Who is it who will have prevented you from having the Rosary crown? None other than the enemies of the Holy Rosary who are so numerous.

Do believe me, only “the violent bear it away.”⁹⁶ These crowns are not for timid souls who are afraid of the world’s taunts and threats, neither are they for the lazy and indolent who only say their Rosary carelessly, or hastily, just for the sake of getting it over with. The same applies to people who say it intermittently, as the spirit moves them. These crowns are not for cowards who lose heart and down their arms as soon as they see Hell let loose against the Holy Rosary.

Dear Confraternity members: if you want to serve Jesus and Mary by saying the Rosary every day, you must be prepared for temptation: “When thou comest to the service of God . . . prepare thy soul for temptation.”⁹⁷ Heretics and licentious folk, “respectable” people of the world, persons of only surface piety as well as false prophets, hand in glove with your fallen

nature and all Hell itself, will wage formidable battles against you in an endeavor to get you to give up this holy practice.

To help you to be better armed against their onslaught I am going to tell you some of the things these people are always saying and thinking. This is to put you on your guard against them all, but not so much in the case of heretics and out-and-out licentious people, but particularly those who are “respectable” in the eyes of the world, and those who are devout (strange as it may seem) but have no use for the Holy Rosary.

“What is it that this word sower would say?”⁹⁸ “Come, let us oppress him, for he is against us.” That is to say: “What is he doing saying so many Rosaries? What is it he is always mumbling? Such laziness! And what a waste of time to keep sliding those old beads along—he would do much better to work and not be bothered with this foolishness. I know what I’m talking about, . . .

“All you have to do, I suppose, is to say your Rosary, and a fortune will fall from Heaven into your lap! The Rosary gives you everything you need without your lifting a finger! But hasn’t it been said: “God helps those who help themselves?” There’s no need then of getting mixed up with so many prayers. “A brief prayer is heard in Heaven,” one Our Father and Hail Mary will do provided they are well said.

“God has never told us to say the Rosary—of course it’s all right, it’s not a bad devotion when you’ve got the time. But don’t think for one minute that people who say the Rosary are any more sure of Heaven than we are. Just look at the Saints who never said it! Far too many people want to make everybody see through their own eyes: folk who carry everything to extremes, scrupulous people who see sin almost everywhere, making sweeping statements and saying that all those who don’t say the Rosary will go to Hell.

“Oh yes, the Rosary is all right for old women who can’t read. But surely the Little Office of Our Lady is much more worthwhile than the Rosary? Or the Seven Penitential Psalms? And how could anything be more beautiful

than the Psalms which are inspired by the Holy Ghost? You say you have agreed to say the Rosary every day; this is nothing but a fire of straw—you know very well it won't last! Wouldn't it be better to undertake less and to be more faithful about it?

“Come on, my friend, take my word for it, say your morning and night prayers, work hard during the day and offer it up—God doesn't ask any more of you than this. Of course you've got your living to earn; if you were a man of leisure I shouldn't say anything—you could say as many Rosaries as you like then. But as for now, say your Rosary on Sundays and Holy Days when you have lots of time, if you really must say it.

“But really and truly—what are you doing with an enormous pair of beads? You look like an old woman instead of a man! I've seen a little Rosary of only one decade—it's just as good as one of fifteen decades. What on earth are you wearing it on your belt for, fanatic that you are? Why don't you go the whole way and wear it around your neck like the Spaniards? They carry an enormous Rosary in one hand—and a dagger in the other.

“For goodness sake drop those external devotions; real devotion is in the heart . . . etc. etc. . . .”

Similarly, not a few clever people and learned scholars may occasionally try to dissuade you from saying the Rosary (but they are, of course, proud and self-willed). They would rather encourage you to say the Seven Penitential Psalms or some other prayers. If a good confessor has given you a Rosary for your penance and has told you to say it every day for a fortnight or a month, all you have to do to get your penance changed to prayers, fasts, Masses or alms, is to go to confession to one of these others.

If you consult certain people in the world who lead lives of prayer, but who have never tried the Rosary, they will not only not encourage it but will turn people away from it to get them to learn contemplation—just as though the Holy Rosary and contemplation were incompatible, just as if all the Saints who have been devoted to the Rosary had not enjoyed the heights of sublime contemplation.

Your nearest enemies will attack you all the more cruelly because you are so close to them. I am speaking of the powers of your soul and your bodily senses—these are distractions of the mind, distress and uncertainty of the will, dryness of the heart, exhaustion and illnesses of the body—all these will combine with the devil to say to you: “Stop saying your Rosary; that is what is giving you such a headache! Give it up; there is no obligation under pain of sin. If you must say it, say only part of it; the difficulties that you are having over it are a sign that Almighty God does not want you to say it. You can finish it tomorrow when you are more in the mood, etc. . . . etc. . . .”

Finally, my dear Brother, the Daily Rosary has so many enemies that I look upon the grace of persevering in it until death as one of the greatest favors Almighty God can give us.

Persevere in it and if you are faithful you will eventually have the wonderful crown which is waiting for you in Heaven: “Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life.”⁹⁹

FORTY-NINTH ROSE

INDULGENCES

THIS IS THE right time to say a little about Indulgences which have been granted to Rosary Confraternity members so that you may gain as many as possible.

Briefly, an Indulgence is a remission or relaxation of temporal punishment due to actual sins, by the application of the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints—which are contained in the Treasury of the Church.

A Plenary Indulgence is a remission of the whole punishment due to sin; a partial indulgence of, for instance, one hundred or one thousand years can be explained as the remission of as much punishment as could have been expiated during one hundred or one thousand years, if one had been given a corresponding number of the penances prescribed by the Church's ancient Canons.

Now these Canons exacted seven and sometimes ten or fifteen years' penance for one single mortal sin, so that a person who was guilty of twenty mortal sins would probably have had to perform a seven year penance at least twenty times, and so on.

Rosary Confraternity members who want to gain the Indulgences must:

1. be truly repentant and must go to Confession and Holy Communion, as the Bull of Indulgences teaches;

2. they must be entirely free from affection for venial sin, because if affection for sin is left the guilt is left too, and since the guilt is there, the punishment cannot be lifted;

3. they must say the prayers and carry out the good works designated by the Bull. If, in accordance with what the Popes have said, one can gain a partial Indulgence (for instance, of one hundred years) without gaining a Plenary Indulgence, it is not always necessary to go to Confession and Holy Communion in order to gain it. Such partial Indulgences are many of those attached to the Rosary (either of five or of fifteen decades) to processions, blessed Rosaries, etc.

Be sure not to neglect these Indulgences. Flammin and a great number of other writers tell the story of a young girl of noble station by the name of Alexandre, who had been miraculously converted and enrolled by Saint Dominic in the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. After her death she appeared to him and said that she had been condemned to seven hundred years of Purgatory, because of her own sins and those that she had made others commit by her worldly ways. So she implored him to ease her pains by his prayers and to ask the Confraternity members to pray for the same end. Saint Dominic did as she had asked.

Two weeks later she appeared to him, more radiant than the sun, having been quickly delivered from Purgatory through the prayers that the Confraternity members had said for her. She also told Saint Dominic that the Holy Souls in Purgatory had given her a message to beg him to go on preaching the Holy Rosary and to beg their relations to offer their Rosaries for them, and that they would reward them abundantly when they came into their glory.

FIFTIETH ROSE

VARIOUS METHODS

SO AS TO MAKE the recitation of the Holy Rosary easier for you, here are several methods which will help you to say it in a good and holy way, together with meditation on the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of Jesus and Mary. Choose whichever method pleases you and helps you the most: you can make one up yourself, if you like, as several holy people have done before now.

METHODS OF SAYING THE MOST HOLY ROSARY SO AS TO DRAW UPON OUR SOULS THE GRACE OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE, PASSION AND GLORY OF JESUS AND MARY

FIRST METHOD¹⁰⁰

FIRST, say the . . . and then make your

OFFERING OF THE ROSARY:

I unite myself with all the Saints in Heaven, and with all the just on earth; I unite myself with Thee, my Jesus, in order to praise Thy Holy Mother worthily and to praise Thee in her and by her. I renounce all the distractions that may come to me while I am saying this Rosary.

Oh, Blessed Virgin Mary, we offer thee this Creed in order to honor the faith that thou didst have upon earth and to ask thee to have us share in the same faith.

Oh Lord; we offer Thee this Our Father so as to adore Thee in Thy oneness and to recognize Thee as the first cause and the last end of all things.

Most Holy Trinity, we offer Thee these three Hail Marys so as to thank Thee for all the graces which Thou hast given to Mary and those which Thou hast given us through her intercession.

HOW TO OFFER EACH DECADE

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

First Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this first decade in honor of Thine Incarnation and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy most Holy Mother, a profound humility.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Incarnation, come down into my soul and make it truly humble.

Second Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this second decade in honor of the Visitation of Thy Holy Mother to her cousin Saint Elizabeth, and we ask of Thee through this mystery and through Mary's intercession, a perfect charity towards our neighbor.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Visitation come down into my soul and make it really charitable.

Third Decade: We offer Thee, O Child Jesus, this third decade in honor of Thy Blessed Nativity, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, detachment from things of this world, love of poverty and love of the poor.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Nativity come down into my soul and make me truly poor in spirit.

Fourth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fourth decade in honor of Thy Presentation in the temple by the hands of Mary, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, the gift of wisdom and purity of heart and body.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Purification, come down into my soul and make it really wise and really pure.

Fifth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fifth decade in honor of Thy Finding in the Temple among the learned men by Our Lady, after she had lost Thee, and we ask Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, to convert us and help us amend our lives, and also to convert all sinners, heretics, schismatics and idolaters.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, come down into my soul and truly convert me.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

Sixth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this sixth decade in honor of Thy mortal Agony in the Garden of Olives and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, perfect sorrow for our sins and the virtue of perfect obedience to Thy Holy Will.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of Our Lord's Agony, come down into my soul and make me truly contrite and perfectly obedient to Thy Will.

Seventh Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this seventh decade in honor of Thy Bloody Scourging and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, the grace to mortify our senses perfectly.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of Our Lord's Scourging, come down into my soul and make me truly mortified.

Eighth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this eighth decade in honor of Thy cruel crowning with thorns, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, a great contempt of the world.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of Our Lord's crowning with Thorns, come down into my soul and make me despise the world.

Ninth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this ninth decade in honor of Thy carrying Thy Cross and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, to give us great patience in carrying our cross in Thy footsteps every day of our life.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the carrying of the Cross, come down into my soul and make me truly patient.

Tenth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this tenth decade in honor of Thy Crucifixion on Mount Calvary, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, a great horror of sin, a love of the Cross and the grace of a holy death for us and for those who are now in their last agony.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Death and Passion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, come down into my soul and make me truly holy.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

ELEVENTH DECADE: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this eleventh decade in honor of Thy triumphant Resurrection and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, a lively faith.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the Resurrection come down into my soul and make me really faithful.

Twelfth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this twelfth decade in honor of Thy glorious Ascension, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, a firm hope and a great longing for Heaven.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the mystery of the Ascension of Our Lord, come down into my soul and make me ready for Heaven.

Thirteenth Decade: We offer Thee, O Holy Spirit, this thirteenth decade in honor of the mystery of Pentecost, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through the intercession of Mary, Thy most faithful Spouse, Thy holy wisdom so that we may know, really love and practise Thy truth, and make all others share in it.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of Pentecost, come down into my soul and make me really wise in the eyes of Almighty God.

Fourteenth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fourteenth decade in honor of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Thy holy and

Blessed Mother, body and soul, into Heaven, and we ask of Thee, through these two mysteries and through her intercession, the gift of true devotion to her to help us live and die holily.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

Grace of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary, come down into my soul and make me truly devoted to her.

Fifteenth Decade: We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fifteenth and last decade in honor of the glorious crowning of Thy Blessed Mother in Heaven, and we ask of Thee, through this mystery and through Her intercession, the grace of perseverance and increase of virtue until the very moment of death and after that the eternal crown that is prepared for us. We ask the same grace for all the just and for all our benefactors.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father . . .

We beseech Thee, dear Lord Jesus, by the fifteen mysteries of Thy life, death and passion, by Thy glory and by the merits of Thy Blessed Mother, to convert sinners and help the dying, to deliver the Holy Souls from Purgatory and to give us all Thy grace so that we may live well and die well—and please give us the Light of Thy glory later on so that we may see Thee face to face and love Thee for all eternity. Amen. So be it.

GOD ALONE

It is customary to say the prayer, THE HAIL HOLY QUEEN after the completion of the Rosary.

SECOND METHOD

A SHORTER WAY OF COMMEMORATING THE LIFE, DEATH AND GLORY OF JESUS AND MARY IN THE MOST HOLY ROSARY, AND A WAY TO CURB OUR IMAGINATION AND TO LESSEN DISTRACTIONS

IN ORDER to do this we must add a word or two to each Hail Mary (depending upon the decade) and this will help remind us which mystery

we are commemorating. This word or words should be added after the word “Jesus.” “And blessed is the fruit of Thy Womb”;

At the 1st Decade “. . .” Jesus incarnate;

At the 2nd Decade “. . .” Jesus sanctifying;

At the 3rd Decade “. . .” Jesus born in poverty;

At the 4th Decade “. . .” Jesus sacrificed;

At the 5th Decade “. . .” Jesus, Saint among Saints;

At the 6th Decade “. . .” Jesus in His agony;

At the 7th Decade “. . .” Jesus scourged;

At the 8th Decade “. . .” Jesus crowned with thorns;

At the 9th Decade “. . .” Jesus carrying His Cross;

At the 10th Decade “. . .” Jesus crucified;

At the 11th Decade “. . .” Jesus risen from the dead;

At the 12th Decade “. . .” Jesus ascending to Heaven;

At the 13th. Decade “. . .” Jesus filling Thee with the Holy Spirit;

At the 14th Decade “. . .” Jesus raising Thee up;

At the 15th Decade “. . .” Jesus crowning Thee.”

At the end of the first five mysteries, we say:

“Grace of the Joyful Mysteries come down into our souls and make them really holy”;

At the end of the second:

“Grace of the Sorrowful Mysteries, come down into our souls and make them truly patient”;

And at the end of the third:

“Grace of the Glorious Mysteries, come down into our souls and make them everlastingly happy. Amen.”

THE MAIN RULES OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY

Members should:

1. Have their names written in the Confraternity book, and, if possible, go to Confession and Holy Communion and say the Holy Rosary the same day that they are enrolled;
2. Have a blessed rosary;
3. Say the Holy Rosary every day or at least once a week;
4. Whenever possible, go to Confession and Holy Communion the First Sunday of every month, and assist at the Holy Rosary Processions.

Remember that none of these rules binds under pain of even venial sin.

APPENDIX

THE POWER, VALUE AND HOLINESS OF THE ROSARY. A REVELATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY TO BLESSED ALAN DE LA ROCHE

THROUGH THE ROSARY, hardened sinners of both sexes became converted and started to lead a holy life, bemoaning their past sins with genuine tears of contrition. Even children performed unbelievable penances; devotion to my Son and to me spread so thoroughly that it almost seemed as though Angels were living on earth. The Faith was gaining, and many Catholics longed to shed their blood for it and fight against the heretics. Thus, through the sermons of my very dear Dominic and through the power of the Rosary, the heretics' lands were all brought under the Church. People used to give munificent alms; hospitals and churches were built. People led moral and law-abiding lives and worked wonders for the glory of God. Holiness and unworldliness flourished; the clergy were exemplary, princes were just, people lived at peace with each other and justice and equity reigned in the guilds and in the homes.

Here is an even more impressive thing: workmen did not take up their tools until they had said my Psalter and they never went to sleep at night without having prayed to me on their knees. If they happened to remember that they had not paid me this tribute they would get up—even in the middle of the night—and then would salute me with great respect and remorse.

The Rosary became so widespread and so well-known that people who were devoted to it were always considered by others as obviously being Confraternity members. If a man lived openly in sin, or blasphemed, it was quite the usual thing to say:

“This man cannot possibly be a brother of Saint Dominic.”

I must not fail to mention the signs and wonders that I have wrought in different lands through the Holy Rosary: I have stopped pestilences and put an end to horrible wars as well as to bloody crimes and through my Rosary people have found the courage to flee temptation.

When you say your Rosary the Angels rejoice, the Blessed Trinity delights in it, my Son finds joy in it too and I myself am happier than you can possibly guess. After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, there is nothing in the Church that I love as much as the Rosary. (Blessed Alan)

Having been strongly urged to do so by Saint Dominic, all the brothers and sisters of his order honored my Son and me unceasingly and in an indescribably beautiful way by saying the Holy Rosary.

Every day each one of them said at least one complete Rosary. If anybody failed to say it he felt that his day was entirely spoiled.

The Brothers of Saint Dominic had so great a love for this holy devotion that it made them do everything better and they used to hurry to church or to the choir to sing the office. If one of them was seen to carry out his duties carelessly the others would say with assurance:

“Oh, Brother! Either you are not saying Mary’s Psalter any more or else you are saying it badly.”

THE SALUTATION OF THE ROSARY IS WORTHY OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

“The Holy Angels in Heaven salute the most Blessed Virgin with the Hail Mary—not audibly, but with their angelic intelligences. For they are fully aware that through it reparation was made for the fallen Angels’ sin, God was made man and the world was renewed” (Blessed Alan).

One night when a woman Confraternity member had retired, Our Lady appeared to her and said:

“My daughter, do not be afraid of me. I am your loving Mother whom you praise so faithfully every day. Be steadfast and persevere; I want you to know that the Angelic Salutation gives me so much joy that no man could ever really explain it.” (Guillaume Pepin, in *Rosario aureo* Sermon 47)

Saint Gertrude corroborated this in one of her visions; in her *Revelations*, Book IV, Chapter II, we find this story:

It was the morning of the feast of the Annunciation and the Hail Mary was of course being sung in Saint Gertrude’s monastery. During the singing she had a vision in which three streams gushed forth from the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and gently flowed into Mary’s virginal heart. The minute they reached her heart they bounded back to the source from where they had come.

From this Saint Gertrude learned that the Blessed Trinity has allowed Our Lady to be most powerful next to God the Father, the wisest after God the Son, and the most loving after God the Holy Ghost. She also learned that every time the Angelic Salutation is said by the faithful the three mysterious streams surround Our Lady in a mighty, swirling current and rush into her

heart. After they have completely bathed her in happiness they gush back into the bosom of Almighty God. The Saints and Angels share in this abundance of joy as do the faithful on earth, who say this prayer. For the Angelic Salutation is the source of all good for God's children.

This is what Our Lady herself said to Saint Gertrude: "Never has any man composed anything more beautiful than the Hail Mary. No salutation could be dearer to my heart than those beautiful and dignified words that God the Father addressed to me Himself."

One day Our Lady said to Saint Mechtilde:

"All the Angelic Salutations that you have given me are blazoned on my cloak." (Then she held out a portion of her mantle.) "When this part of my cloak is full of Hail Marys I shall gather you up and take you into the Kingdom of my Beloved Son."

Denis the Carthusian, speaking of a vision of Our Lady to one of her clients, said:

"We should salute the most Blessed Virgin with our hearts, our lips, and our deeds, so that she will not be able to say to us:

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Richard of Saint Laurent lists the reasons why it is good to say a Hail Mary at the beginning of a sermon:

1. The Church Militant should follow the example of Saint Gabriel who saluted Mary with great respect saying the Hail Mary, before he told her the joyous tidings: "Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a son . . ." Thus the Church salutes the Blessed Virgin before announcing the Gospel.

2. The congregation will derive more fruit from a sermon that is prefaced by the Hail Mary; the priest who gives the sermon has the Angel's role as it were. But in order that the congregation may give birth to Christ in their souls (by faith) they must first of all obtain this grace from the Blessed

Virgin who gave birth to Him the first time, and together with her they will become the Mothers of the Son of God. For without Mary they cannot produce Jesus in their souls.

3. The Gospels show up the power of the Hail Mary; people will get help from Our Lady through this prayer.

4. To say it is a great safeguard and a way of avoiding, dangerous pitfalls: Mary, our Illuminatrix, gives light to preachers.

5. The members of the congregation, following Our Lady's example, listen more attentively and are more apt to remember God's words.

6. The devil (who is the enemy of the human race and of the preaching of the Gospel) is driven off by the Hail Mary. This is most necessary because, to quote Our Lord's words, there is danger of his coming to take the word of God out of people's hearts, "lest believing they might be saved."

In his first sermon on the Holy Rosary Clement Losoun says:

"After Saint Dominic had gone to Heaven devotion to the Rosary waned until it was very nearly dead, when a terrible pestilence broke out in several parts of the country. The wretched people sought the advice of a saintly hermit who lived in the desert in great austerity. They besought him to intercede to Almighty God for them. So the hermit called upon the Mother of God, imploring her, as Advocate of Sinners, to come to their aid.

"Our Lady then appeared and said: 'These people have stopped singing my praises. This is why they have been visited with such a scourge. If they will only go back to the ancient devotion of the Most Holy Rosary, they will enjoy my protection. I shall see to their salvation if only they will sing the Rosary, for I love this type of chanting.'

"So the people did what Mary asked and made themselves rosaries, which they started saying with all their heart and soul."

INDULGENCES

An Indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins which have already been forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned.

Indulgences are granted by God through the Catholic Church which, as minister of the Redemption, dispenses and applies the treasury of the satisfaction won by Christ and the Saints.

Though the guilt of sin and the eternal punishment it may have merited are remitted by sacramental absolution, measurable punishment before or after death is still required in order to satisfy God's justice, even for sins already forgiven. To the extent we fail to atone sufficiently for our sins during our lifetimes on earth, we will suffer for a given "time" in Purgatory. An Indulgence cancels or lessens this non-eternal punishment.

In order to gain an Indulgence, one must be Baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace at least at the completion of the prescribed work. In order to gain Indulgences, one must have at least a general intention of gaining them. If at the beginning of the day we make an intention to gain all the Indulgences we can that day, we do not have to make this intention each time we perform a work to which an Indulgence is attached. An Indulgence may be gained for oneself or may be offered for Souls in Purgatory, but may not be applied to another living person.

A plenary Indulgence remits all the punishment due for sin and makes possible immediate entrance into Heaven after death.

THE NEW NORMS

To gain a plenary Indulgence, it is necessary to perform the work to which the Indulgence is attached and to fulfill three conditions: sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Pope. (The recitation of one Our Father and one Hail Mary fully suffices, though we are free to say any other prayer we desire.) It is further required that all attachment to sin, even venial sin, be absent. If the latter disposition is in any way less than complete or if the three prescribed conditions are not fulfilled, the Indulgence will be only partial.

The three conditions may be fulfilled several days before or several days after performing the prescribed work; nevertheless, it is fitting that Communion be received and prayer for the Pope's intentions be said the same day the work is performed.

A single Confession suffices for gaining several plenary Indulgences. However, one must receive Holy Communion and pray for the Pope's intentions for each plenary Indulgence. To be able to gain a daily plenary Indulgence, one should go to Confession at least every two weeks.

Only one plenary Indulgence can be acquired each day, unless a person is at the point of death. In that event, even after gaining a plenary Indulgence that day, one can gain the plenary Indulgence for the moment of death.

A partial Indulgence remits only part of the punishment due for sin and is now granted without designation of a specific number of "days" or "years." The faithful who, at least with a contrite heart, perform an action or recite a prayer to which a partial Indulgence is attached, obtain, in addition to the remission of temporal punishment acquired by the action itself, an equal remission of punishment through the intervention of the Church. The amount remitted depends on the person's fervor, on the greatness of the sacrifice, and on how perfectly the act is performed. Any number of partial Indulgences can be acquired per day, unless otherwise indicated.

INDULGENCES FOR PRAYING THE ROSARY

A plenary indulgence is granted for reciting five decades of the Rosary in a church or public oratory or in a family group, religious community or pious association. A partial indulgence is granted in other circumstances. The five decades must be recited continuously. The vocal recitation must be accompanied by pious meditation on the mysteries. In public recitation the mysteries must be announced in the manner customary in the place; for private recitation, however, it suffices if the vocal recitation is accompanied by meditation on the mysteries.

NOTE TO THE READER

Having finished reading *THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY*, you are called upon by Our Lady to act and to apply these life-saving instructions in your daily life. The world is in grave peril from Communism, and the Church is equally in peril from the enemy within, who seeks to disarm her by suggesting that we should abandon the Holy Rosary. Pope Paul VI warned us of this when he said, “The smoke of Satan has entered the Church.”

Have any of the Free World’s great powers in this century been able to stem the advance of Communism—the direst foe of God in all history? But where man has failed, history records that the Rosary alone has succeeded. Austria, Brazil, Chile and Portugal all saved themselves from the peril of Communism—by the recitation of the Rosary. (Read *Fatima the Great Sign* for proof.) St. Louis De Montfort tells us that the Rosary was largely responsible for the crucial victory of Lepanto in October, 1571. Four centuries later, at the outset of Communism in 1917, Our Lady told us at Fatima: “If people attend to my requests, Russia will be converted and the world will have peace. If not, Russia will spread its errors throughout the world, fomenting wars . . . and various nations will be annihilated.”

Can anyone deny that these calamitous events are coming to pass in our times? The threat of worse suffering to come can still be averted, and another signal victory like that at Lepanto over the Turks can be won today, if enough people will respond here and now to Our Lady’s requests to do penance in reparation for sin (the cause of all wars) and especially to “pray the Rosary every day.” For all the vast paraphernalia of power politics are but a shadow compared with the infinite power of the Rosary before God, provided it is fervently used and propagated.

Please do everything possible to help make this vital book more widely known by purchasing extra copies to pass out to your friends, relatives and acquaintances. The issue is the salvation of souls and peace in the world.

PRAYERS USED ON THE HOLY ROSARY

The Sign of the Cross

Apostles' Creed

The Our Father

The Hail Mary

The Glory Be

Fatima Decade Prayer

The Hail Holy Queen

SIGN OF THE CROSS

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

THE OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be
Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done,
on earth, as it is in Heave. Give us this day our
daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us

not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is
the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

THE GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in
the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and in
Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,
died, and was buried.

He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He
ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I
believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of
Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life
everlasting. Amen.

FATIMA DECADE PRAYER

(To be said after the Glory Be at the end of each decade of the Rosary)

O MY JESUS, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need of Thy mercy.

HAIL HOLY QUEEN
(SALVE REGINA)

HAIL, holy Queen, Mother of mercy.

Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope!

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;

To thee do we send up our sighs,

mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,

thine eyes of mercy toward us.

And after this our exile show unto us

the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

PARTIAL INDULGENCE

Most holy Virgin Immaculate, my Mother Mary, to thee who art the Mother of my Lord, the Queen of the universe, the advocate, the hope, the refuge of sinners, I who am the most miserable of all sinners, have recourse this day. I venerate thee, great Queen, and I thank thee for the many graces thou hast bestowed upon me even unto this day; in particular for having delivered me from the Hell which I have so often deserved by my sins. I love thee, most

dear Lady; and for the love I bear thee, I promise to serve thee willingly for ever and to do what I can to make thee loved by others also. I place in thee all my hopes for salvation; accept me as thy servant and shelter me under thy mantle, thou who art the Mother of mercy. And since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or at least obtain for me the strength to overcome them until death. From thee I implore a true love for Jesus Christ. Through thee I hope to die a holy death. My dear Mother, by the love thou bearest to Almighty God, I pray thee to assist me always, but most of all at the last moment of my life. Forsake me not then, until thou shalt see me safe in Heaven, there to bless thee and sing of thy mercies through all eternity. Such is my hope. *Amen.* (St. Alphonsus M. de Liguori)

THE LOVE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

TRANSLATED BY
A. SOMMERS

Copyright © 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing.
All rights reserved.

Copyright © 1960 by Montfort Publications, Bay Shore, N.Y., US.
Retypeset and republished in 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing. Cover design by Catholic Way
Publishing.

This work is published for the greater Glory of Jesus Christ through His most Holy Mother Mary and
for the sanctification of the militant Church and her members.

The typography of this book is the property of Catholic Way Publishing and may not be reproduced,
in whole or in part, without written permission of the Publisher.

Catholic Way Publishing® and the associated logo are registered Trademarks of the Catholic Way
Publishing Company.

Available in Paperback.

CONTENTS

INDEX

THE LOVE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

CONTENTS

PRAYER TO ETERNAL WISDOM

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

TO LOVE AND SEEK DIVINE WISDOM WE NEED TO KNOW HIM

OUR NEED TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE WISDOM

DEFINITION AND DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGIN AND EXCELLENCE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

WISDOM IN REFERENCE TO THE FATHER

THE ACTIVITY OF ETERNAL WISDOM IN SOULS

CHAPTER THREE

THE MARVELLOUS POWER OF DIVINE WISDOM SHOWN IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND MAN

IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

IN THE CREATION OF MAN

CHAPTER FOUR

MARVELS OF WISDOM'S GOODNESS AND MERCY BEFORE HIS INCARNATION

THE INCARNATION IS DECREED

THE TIME BEFORE THE INCARNATION

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER FIVE
MARVELLOUS EXCELLENCE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

CHAPTER SIX
EARNEST DESIRE OF DIVINE WISDOM TO GIVE HIMSELF TO MEN

ETERNAL WISDOM'S LETTER OF LOVE

INCARNATION, DEATH AND THE EUCHARIST

THE INGRATITUDE OF THOSE WHO REFUSE

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER SEVEN
CHOICE OF TRUE WISDOM

WISDOM OF THE WORLD

NATURAL WISDOM

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER EIGHT
MARVELLOUS EFFECTS OF WISDOM IN THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO POSSESS HIM

CHAPTER NINE
THE INCARNATION AND LIFE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

THE INCARNATION

LIFE OF WISDOM INCARNATE

CHAPTER TEN
THE CAPTIVATING BEAUTY AND THE INEXPRESSIBLE GENTLENESS OF INCARNATE WISDOM

WISDOM IS GENTLE IN HIS ORIGIN

HE IS DECLARED GENTLE BY THE PROPHETS

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS NAME

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS LOOKS

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS WORDS

CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE GENTLENESS OF THE INCARNATE WISDOM IN HIS ACTIONS

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS ACTIONS

HE CONTINUES TO BE GENTLE IN HEAVEN

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PRINCIPAL UTTERANCES OF WISDOM INCARNATE WHICH WE MUST BELIEVE
AND PRACTISE IF WE ARE TO BE SAVED

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SUMMARY OF THE UNBELIEVABLE SORROWS THE INCARNATE WISDOM CHOSE TO
ENDURE OUT OF LOVE FOR US

THE MOST CONVINCING REASON FOR LOVING WISDOM

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS PASSION

THE GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE SUFFERED

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE TRIUMPH OF ETERNAL WISDOM IN AND BY THE CROSS

WISDOM AND THE CROSS

THE CROSS AND OURSELVES

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MEANS TO ACQUIRE DIVINE WISDOM

THE FIRST MEANS
AN ARDENT DESIRE

THE SECOND MEANS
CONTINUOUS PRAYER

PRAYER OF SOLOMON

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE THIRD MEANS
UNIVERSAL MORTIFICATION

NECESSITY OF MORTIFICATION

QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR MORTIFICATION

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FOURTH MEANS
A LOVING AND GENUINE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

NECESSITY OF GENUINE DEVOTION TO MARY

WHAT GENUINE DEVOTION TO MARY CONSISTS IN

CONSECRATION OF ONESELF TO JESUS CHRIST, WISDOM INCARNATE, THROUGH
THE HANDS OF MARY

PRAYER TO ETERNAL WISDOM

1. O divine Wisdom, Lord of heaven and earth, I humbly beg pardon for my audacity in attempting to speak of your perfections, ignorant and sinful as I am. I beg you not to consider the darkness of my mind or the uncleanness of my lips unless it be to take them away with a glance of your eyes and a breath of your mouth.

There is in you so much beauty and delight; you have shielded me from so many evils and showered on me so many favors, and you are moreover so little known and so much slighted. How can I remain silent? Not only justice and gratitude, but my own interests urge me to speak about you, even though it be so imperfectly. It is true, I can only lisp like a child, but then I am only a child, anxious to learn how to speak properly through my lisping, once I have attained the fullness of your age (cf. Eph. 4:13).

2. I know there seems to be neither order nor sense in what I write, but because I long so dearly to possess you, I am looking for you everywhere, like Solomon, wandering in all directions (Wisd. 8:18). If I am striving to make you known in this world, it is because you yourself have promised that all who explain you and make you known will have eternal life (cf. Sir. 8:18).

Accept, then, my loving Lord, these humble words of mine as though they were a masterly discourse. Look upon the strokes of my pen as so many steps to find you and from your throne above bestow your blessings and your enlightenment on what I mean to say about you, so that those who read it may be filled with a fresh desire to love you and possess you, on earth as well as in heaven.

Admonitions of divine Wisdom
to the rulers of this world

given in the sixth chapter
of the “Book of Wisdom”

- 3.1. Wisdom is better than strength and prudence is better than courage.
2. Listen, therefore, kings, and understand. Learn, you judges of the nations.
3. Hear this, you who rule the people and boast of the large number of nations subject to you.
4. Remember you have received your power from the Lord and your authority from the Most High, who will examine your works and scrutinize your thoughts.
5. For, though ministers of his kingdom, you have not judged fairly, nor observed the law of justice, nor walked according to his will.
6. He will appear to you terribly and swiftly, because those who rule others will be judged severely.
7. For God has more compassion for the lowly and they are forgiven more easily, but the mighty will be punished mightily.
8. God shows no partiality; he does not stand in awe of anyone’s greatness, because he himself made both the lowly and the great and he is concerned for all alike.
9. But the great are threatened with greater punishment.
10. To you then, rulers, my words are directed so that you may learn wisdom and may not go astray.
11. For they who perform just deeds will be considered just and those who have understood what I teach will have a valid defense.
12. Therefore, desire ardently to know my words, love them and you will find instruction in them.

4.13. Wisdom is resplendent and her beauty never fades. Those who love her will have no trouble in recognizing her; and those who seek her will find her.

14. She anticipates those who desire her and makes herself known first to them.

15. He who rises early to look for her will not be disappointed, for she will be found sitting at his gate.

16. To reflect on Wisdom is the highest prudence and he who foregoes sleep to possess her will soon be given repose.

17. For she goes around seeking those worthy of her, graciously shows her ways to them, guides them and provides for them with loving care.

18. The first step, then, towards acquiring Wisdom is a sincere desire for instruction; the desire for instruction is love; and love is the keeping of her laws.

19. Assiduous obedience to her laws assures a perfect purity of soul.

20. And perfect purity brings one close to God.

21. Thus the desire for Wisdom leads to the everlasting kingdom.

22. If then, rulers of nations, you delight in thrones and scepters, love Wisdom and you will reign eternally.

23. All you who rule over the peoples of the world, love the insight given by Wisdom.

24. I will tell you now what Wisdom is and how she came to be. I will not hide the secrets of God from you but I will trace her right from the beginning. I will throw light upon

her and make her known and not hide the truth.

25. I will not imitate the man consumed with envy, for the envious have nothing in common with Wisdom.

26. Multitudes of wise men will bring salvation to the world, and a prudent king is a strong support for his people.

27. Accept, then, instruction from my words and you will draw profit from them.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

5. I did not want, my dear reader, to mingle my poor words with the inspired words of the Holy Spirit. Yet I make bold to offer a few comments:

1. How gentle, attractive and approachable is eternal Wisdom who possesses such splendor, excellence and grandeur. He invites men to come to him because he wants to teach them the way to happiness. He is for ever searching for them and always greets them with a smile. He bestows blessings on them many times over and forestalls their needs in a thousand different ways, and even goes as far as to wait at their very doorstep to give them proofs of his friendship.

Who could be so heartless as to refuse to love this gentle conqueror?

6.2. How unfortunate are the rich and powerful if they do not love eternal Wisdom. How terrifying are the warnings he gives them, so terrifying that they cannot be expressed in human terms: “He will appear to you terribly and swiftly . . . those who rule will be judged severely . . . the mighty will be punished mightily . . . the great are threatened with greater punishment” (Wisd. 6:6,7,9).

To these words can be added those he uttered after he became man: “Woe to you who are rich (Lk. 6:24) . . . it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 19; Mk. 10; Lk. 18).

So often were these last words repeated by divine Wisdom while on earth that the three evangelists handed them down without the least variation. They ought to make the rich weep and lament: “And now, you rich people, weep and wail over the miseries that are coming upon you” (Jas. 5:1).

But alas! they find their consolation (Lk. 6:24) here on earth; they are as though captivated by the riches and pleasures they enjoy and are blind to the evils that hang over their heads.

7.3. Solomon promises that he will give a faithful and exact description of divine Wisdom and that neither envy nor pride—both contrary to love—can prevent him from making known this heaven-sent knowledge, and he has not the least fear that anyone will surpass him or equal him in knowledge (cf. Wisd. 6:24–26).

Following the example of this great man, I am going, in my simple way, to portray eternal Wisdom before, during and after his incarnation and show by what means we can possess and keep him.

But as I do not have Solomon's profound learning or his insights I have less to fear from pride and envy than from my incompetence and ignorance, which I trust, in your kindness, you will overlook.

CHAPTER ONE

TO LOVE AND SEEK DIVINE WISDOM WE NEED TO KNOW HIM

OUR NEED TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE WISDOM

8. Can we love someone we do not even know? Can we love deeply someone we know only vaguely? Why is Jesus, the adorable, eternal and incarnate Wisdom loved so little if not because he is either too little known or not known at all?

Hardly anyone studies the supreme science of Jesus, as did St. Paul (Eph. 3:19). And yet this is the most noble, the most consoling, the most useful and the most vital of all sciences and subjects in heaven and on earth.

9.1. First, it is the most noble of all sciences because its subject is the most noble and the most sublime: Wisdom uncreated and incarnate. He possesses in himself the fullness of divinity and humanity alike and all that is great in heaven and on earth, namely, all creatures visible and invisible, spiritual and corporal.

St. John Chrysostom says that our Lord is the summary of all God's works, the epitome of all the perfections to be found in God and in his creatures (cf. Col. 1:16; 2:9).

“Jesus Christ is everything that you can and should wish for. Long for him, seek for him, because he is that unique and precious pearl for which you should be ready to sell everything you possess.”

“Let the wise man boast no more of his wisdom nor the strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his wealth. But if anyone wants to boast, let him boast only of understanding and knowing me and nothing else (Jer. 9:23–24).”

10.2. Nothing is more consoling than to know divine Wisdom. Happy are those who listen to him; happier still are those who desire him and seek him; but happiest of all are those who keep his laws. Their hearts will be filled with that infinite consolation which is the joy and happiness of the eternal Father and the glory of the angels (cf. Prov. 2:1–9).

If only we knew the joy of a soul that perceives the beauty of divine Wisdom and is nourished with the milk of divine kindness, we would cry out with the bride in the Song of Songs: “Your love is better than wine” (Song 1:3) better by far than all created delights. This is especially true when divine Wisdom says to those who contemplate him, “Taste and see” (Ps. 33:9) eat and drink, be filled with my eternal sweetness (Song 5:1), for you will discover that conversing with me is in no way distasteful, that my companionship is never tedious and in me only will you find joy and contentment (Wisd. 8:16).

11.3. This knowledge of eternal Wisdom is not only the most noble and the most consoling of all, it is also the most useful and the most necessary since eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ, his Son (Jn. 17:3).

Speaking to eternal Wisdom, the Wise man exclaims, “To know you is perfect righteousness and to know your justice and your power is the root of immortality” (Wisd. 15:3). If we really want to have eternal life let us learn all there is to know about eternal Wisdom.

If we wish to have roots of immortality deeply embedded in our heart we must have in our mind knowledge of eternal Wisdom. To know Jesus Christ incarnate Wisdom, is to know all we need. To presume to know everything and not know him is to know nothing at all.

12. Of what use is it for an archer to hit the outer part of a target if he cannot hit the centre? What good will it do us to know all the other

branches of knowledge necessary for salvation if we do not learn the only essential one, the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, the centre towards which all the other branches of knowledge must tend? Although the great Apostle St. Paul was a man of such extensive knowledge and so well versed in human learning, still he said that he did not know anything except Jesus Christ and him nailed to a cross (1 Cor. 2:2).

Let us then say with him, “I count as loss all the knowledge I have prized so highly until now when I compare it to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Savior” (Phil. 3:7–8). Now I see and understand that this knowledge is so excellent, so captivating, so profitable, so admirable that I no longer take any interest in other branches of knowledge that I used to like so much. Everything else is so meaningless, so absurd and a foolish waste of time. “I say this to make sure that no one deceives you with beguiling words. Make sure that no one ensnares you with empty, rational philosophy” (Col. 2:4,8). I state that Jesus is the abyss of all knowledge so that you do not let yourself be deceived by the fine, glowing words of orators or by the specious subtleties of philosophers. “Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

That we may all grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, incarnate Wisdom, we are going to speak of him in the following chapters. But first, let us consider the different kinds of wisdom.

DEFINITION AND DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT

13. In the general sense of the term wisdom means a delectable knowledge, a taste for God and his truth.

There are several kinds of wisdom.

First, true and false wisdom. True wisdom is a taste for truth without falsehood or deception. False wisdom is a taste for falsehood disguised as truth.

This false wisdom is the wisdom or the prudence of the world, which the Holy Spirit divides into three classes: earthly, sensual, and diabolical. True

wisdom may be divided into natural and supernatural wisdom.

Natural wisdom is the knowledge, in an outstanding degree, of natural things in their principles. Supernatural wisdom is knowledge of supernatural and divine things in their origin.

This supernatural wisdom is divided into substantial or uncreated Wisdom, and accidental or created wisdom. Accidental or created wisdom is the communication that uncreated Wisdom makes of himself to mankind. In other words, it is the gift of wisdom. Substantial or uncreated Wisdom is the Son of God, the second person of the most Blessed Trinity. In other words, it is eternal Wisdom in eternity or Jesus Christ in time.

It is precisely about this eternal Wisdom that we are going to speak.

14. Starting with his very origin, we shall consider Wisdom in eternity, dwelling in his Father's bosom and object of his Father's love.

Next, we shall see him in time, shining forth in the creation of the universe.

Then we shall consider him in the deep abasement of his incarnation and his mortal life; and then we shall see him glorious and triumphant in heaven.

Finally we shall propose the means to acquire and keep him.

I leave to philosophers their useless philosophical arguments and to scientists the secrets of their worldly wisdom.

Let us now speak to chosen souls seeking perfection (1 Cor. 2:6) of true wisdom, eternal Wisdom, Wisdom uncreated and incarnate.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGIN AND EXCELLENCE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

15. Here, with St. Paul, we must declare, “O the depth, the immensity and the incomprehensibility of the Wisdom of God” (Rom. 11:33): *Generationem ejus quis enarrabit?* (Is. 53:8; Acts 8:33). Who is the angel so enlightened, who is the man rash enough as to attempt to give us an adequate explanation of the origin of eternal Wisdom? For here all human beings must close their eyes so as not to be blinded by the vivid brightness of his light.

All should be silent for fear of tarnishing his perfect beauty by attempting to portray him.

Every mind should realize its inadequacy and adore, lest in striving to fathom him, it be crushed by the tremendous weight of his glory.

WISDOM IN REFERENCE TO THE FATHER

16. Adapting himself to our weakness, the Holy Spirit offers this description of eternal Wisdom in the Book of Wisdom which he composed just for us.

“Eternal Wisdom is a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. Hence nothing defiled gains entrance into him. He is the reflection of eternal light, the spotless mirror of God’s majesty, the image of his goodness” (Wisd. 7:25,26).

17. He is the substantial and eternal idea of divine beauty which was shown to St. John the Evangelist in his ecstatic vision on the island of Patmos, when he exclaimed, “In the beginning was the Word—the Son of God, or eternal Wisdom—and the Word was in God and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1).

18. This is the eternal Wisdom of which Solomon often speaks in his book (cf. Sir. 1:4,8; 24:14) when he says that Wisdom was created—that is, produced—from the very beginning before anything was made or even before the beginning of time.

Speaking of himself, Wisdom says, “I was begotten from eternity, before the creation of the world. The depths did not exist as yet and I was already conceived” (Prov. 8:23,24).

19. God the Father was well pleased with the sovereign beauty of eternal Wisdom, his Son, throughout time and eternity, as he himself explicitly testified on the day of his Son’s baptism and his transfiguration, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 17:5; cf. Mt. 3:17. Cf. Nos. 55, 98).

This splendor of dazzling and incomprehensible light of which the apostles caught a glimpse in the Transfiguration, filled them with delight and lifted them to the heights of ecstasy:

Illustre quiddam (cernimus)
Sublime, celsum, interminum,
Antiquius caelo et chao:

This eternal Wisdom is—
Something resplendent,
Sublime, immense, and infinite,
More ancient than the universe.

My words fail to give even the faintest idea of his beauty and supreme gentleness, and fall infinitely short of his excellence: for who can ever form an adequate idea of him? Who could ever portray him faithfully? You alone, great God, know who he is and can reveal him to all you wish (cf. Mt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22).

THE ACTIVITY OF ETERNAL WISDOM IN SOULS

20. This is how divine Wisdom himself describes in the twenty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus the effects of his activity in souls. I shall not mingle my poor words with his for fear of diminishing their clarity and sublime meaning.

1. Wisdom will sing her own praises. She will be honored in the Lord and will proclaim his glory before his own people.

2. In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth; she will glorify herself in the armies of the Lord.

3. She will be raised up in the midst of her own people and will be admired in the assembly of all the saints.

4. In the multitude of the elect she will be praised and will be blessed by those who are blessed by God. She will say:

21.5. I came forth from the mouth of the Most High; I was born before all creatures.

6. I made an unquenchable light appear in the sky and I covered the whole earth like a mist.

7. I had my dwelling in the heights and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

8. Alone I compassed the vault of heaven; I penetrated into the depths of the abyss; I walked on the waves of the sea,

9. and traveled all over the earth.

22.10. I held sway over every people and every nation.

11. By my power I have trodden underfoot the hearts of all men, great and small; and among all these things I searched for a resting-place and a dwelling in the heritage of the Lord.

23.12. Then the Creator of the universe commanded me and spoke to me: he who created me rested in my tent.

13. And he said to me: “Dwell in Jacob, let Israel be your heritage, and take root in my elect.”

24.14. In the beginning, before all ages, he created me and through the ages I shall never cease to be, and in the holy tabernacle I ministered before him.

15. I fixed my abode in Sion; I found rest in the holy City, and Jerusalem became my domain.

25.16. I took root in the people whom the Lord had honored, whose heritage is the portion of the Lord. I fixed my abode in the assembly of all the saints.

17. Like a cedar on Lebanon and like a cypress on Mount Sion I have grown tall.

18. I raised my branches high like a palm-tree in Engedi and like the rose-bushes of Jericho.

19. I grew tall like a beautiful olive-tree in the field, like a plane-tree planted along the road near the water.

20. I gave forth fragrance like cinnamon or the most precious balm; I gave forth perfume like the most exquisite myrrh.

21. I have filled my house with sweet fragrance as of galbanum, onycha, myrrh and with the sweet smell of incense; I exude the scent of the purest balm.

22. I spread out my branches like a terebinth and my branches are glorious and graceful.

23. I have grown sweet-smelling flowers like the vine; my blossoms are the fruits of glory and wealth.

26.24. I am the mother of pure love, of fear, of knowledge and of holy hope.

25. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and strength.

27.26. Come to me, all you who desire for me, and be filled with my fruits.

27. For my spirit is sweeter than honey and my inheritance more delightful than the sweetest honeycomb.

28. My renown will endure down through the ages.

28.29. Those who eat of me will hunger for more; those who drink of me will thirst for more.

30. Those who listen to me will not be put to shame; those who work with me will not sin.

31. Those who make me known will possess eternal life.

32. All this is the book of life, the covenant of the Most High, and the knowledge of the truth.”

29. Eternal Wisdom compares himself to all these trees and plants, characterized by their varied fruits and qualities which illustrate the great variety of states, functions and virtues of privileged souls. These resemble cedars by the loftiness of their hearts raised up towards heaven, or cypress trees by their constant meditation on death. They resemble palm-trees by their humble endurance of labor, or rose-bushes by martyrdom and the shedding of their blood. They resemble plane-trees planted along river banks, or terebinths with their branches spread out wide, signifying their great love for their fellow-men. They resemble all the other less noticeable but fragrant plants like balm, myrrh and others which symbolize all those retiring souls who prefer to be known by God more than by man.

30. Divine Wisdom shows himself to be the mother and source of all good and he exhorts all men to give up everything and desire him alone. Because,

as St Augustine says, “he gives himself only to those who desire him and seek him with all the zeal such a lofty aim deserves.”

In verses 30 and 31 divine Wisdom lists three degrees in holy living, the last of which constitutes perfection:

- (1) Listen to God with humble submission;
- (2) Act in him and through him with persevering fidelity;
- (3) Seek to acquire the light and unction you need to inspire others with that love for Wisdom which will lead them to eternal life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MARVELLOUS POWER OF DIVINE WISDOM SHOWN IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND MAN

IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

31. Eternal Wisdom began to manifest himself outside the bosom of God the Father when, after a whole eternity, he made light, heaven and earth. St John tells us that everything was made through the Word, that is eternal Wisdom: “All things were made by him” (Jn. 1:3; cf. Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16–17).

Solomon says that eternal Wisdom is the mother and maker of all things. Notice that Solomon does not call him simply the maker of the universe but also its mother because the maker does not love and care for the work of his hands like a mother does for her child (Wisd. 7: 12,21).

32. After creating all things, eternal Wisdom abides in them to contain, maintain and renew them (Wisd. 1:7; 7:27). It was this supremely perfect beauty who, after creating the universe, established the magnificent order we find there. He it was who separated, arranged, evaluated, augmented and calculated everything.

He spread out the skies; he set the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets in perfect order. He laid the foundations of the earth and assigned limits and laws to the sea and depths to the ocean. He raised mountains and gave moderation to all things even to the springs of water. Finally, he says, “I was with God and I disposed everything with such perfect precision and

such pleasing variety that it was like playing a game to entertain my Father and myself” (Prov. 8:30–31).

33. This mysterious game of divine Wisdom is clearly seen in the great variety of all he created. Apart from considering the different species of angels whose number is well-nigh infinite, and the varied brightness of the stars and the different temperaments of men, we are filled with wonderment at the changes we see in the seasons and the weather, at the variety of instincts in animals, at the different species of plants, at the diversified beauty of the flowers and the different tastes of the fruits. “Let him who is wise understand these things” (Hos. 14:10; cf. Jer. 9:12; Ps. 106:43). Who is the one to whom eternal Wisdom has communicated his wisdom? That person alone will understand these mysteries of nature.

34. Eternal Wisdom has revealed these things to the saints, as we learn from their biographies. At times they were so astonished at the beauty, the harmony and the order that God has put into the smallest things, such as a bee, an ant, an ear of corn, a flower, a worm, that they were carried away in rapture and ecstasy.

IN THE CREATION OF MAN

35. If the power and gentleness of eternal Wisdom were so luminously evident in the creation, the beauty and order of the universe, they shone forth far more brilliantly in the creation of man. For man is his supreme masterpiece, the living image of his beauty and his perfection, the great vessel of his graces, the wonderful treasury of his wealth and in a unique way his representative on earth. “By your wisdom you appointed man to have dominion over every creature you made” (Wisd. 9:2).

36. For the glory of this magnificent and powerful Worker I must describe the original beauty and excellence of man as created by divine Wisdom. But the state of man’s grievous sin has fallen upon me, poor miserable child of Eve, dulling my understanding to the point that I can describe only very imperfectly the work of man’s creation.

37. We might say that eternal Wisdom made copies, that is, shining likenesses of his own intelligence, memory, and will, and infused them into the soul of man so that he might become the living image of the Godhead. In man's heart he enkindled the fire of the pure love of God. He gave him a radiant body and virtually enshrined within him a compendium of all the various perfections of angels, animals, and other created things.

38. Man's entire being was bright without shadow, beautiful without blemish, pure without stain, perfectly proportioned without deformity, flaw, or imperfection. His mind, gifted with the light of wisdom, understood perfectly both Creator and creature. The grace of God was in his soul making him innocent and pleasing to the most High God. His body was endowed with immortality. He had the pure love of God in his heart without any fear of death, for he loved God ceaselessly, without wavering and purely for God himself. In short, man was so godlike, so absorbed and rapt in God that he had no unruly passions to subdue and no enemies to overcome.

Such was the generosity shown to man by eternal Wisdom and such was the happiness that man enjoyed in his state of innocence.

39. But, alas, the vessel of the Godhead was shattered into a thousand pieces. This beautiful star fell from the skies. This brilliant sun lost its light. Man sinned, and by his sin lost his wisdom, his innocence, his beauty, his immortality. In a word, he lost all the good things he was given and found himself burdened with a host of evils. His mind was darkened and impaired. His heart turned cold towards the God he no longer loved. His sin-stained soul resembled Satan himself. The passions were in disorder; he was no longer master of himself. His only companions are the devils who have made him their slave and their abode. Even creatures have risen up in warfare against him.

In a single instant, man became the slave of demons, the object of God's anger (Cf. Eph. 2:3), the prey of the powers of hell.

He became so hideous in his own sight that he hid himself for shame. He was cursed and condemned to death. He was driven from the earthly paradise and excluded from heaven. With no hope of future happiness, he was doomed to eke out a pitiable life upon an earth under curse (cf. Gen. 3:10; 17:23; 4:11,12). He would eventually die like a criminal and after death, together with all his posterity, share the devil's damnation in body and soul.

Such was the frightful calamity which befell man when he sinned. Such was the well-deserved sentence God in his justice pronounced against him.

40. Seeing himself in such a plight, Adam came close to despair. He could not hope for help from angels or any of God's creatures. Nothing could restore his privileges because he had been so eminently fair, so very magnificently fashioned when he was created, and now by his sin he had become so hideous, so repulsive. He saw himself banished from Paradise and from the presence of God. He could see God's justice pursuing him in all his descendants. He saw heaven closed and no one to open it; he saw hell open and no one to close it.

CHAPTER FOUR

MARVELS OF WISDOM'S GOODNESS AND MERCY BEFORE HIS INCARNATION

41. Eternal Wisdom was deeply moved by the plight of Adam and all his descendants. He was profoundly distressed at seeing his vessel of honor shattered, his image torn to pieces, his masterpiece destroyed, his representative in this world overthrown.

He listened tenderly to man's sighs and entreaties and he was moved with compassion when he saw the sweat of his brow, the tears in his eyes, the fatigue of his arms, his sadness of heart, his affliction of soul.

THE INCARNATION IS DECREED

42. I seem to see this lovable Sovereign convoking and assembling the most holy Trinity, a second time, so to speak, for the purpose of rehabilitating man in the state he formerly created him (cf. Gen. 1:26). We can picture a kind of contest going on in this grand council between eternal Wisdom and God's justice.

43. I seem to hear eternal Wisdom, in his plea on behalf of man, admit that because of his sin man and all his descendants deserve to be condemned and to spend all eternity with the rebel angels. Still, man should be pitied because he sinned more through ignorance and weakness than through malice. He points out that it would be a pity if such an exquisite masterpiece were to become the slave of the devil for ever, and millions upon millions of men were to be lost eternally, through the sin of only one man. Besides, eternal Wisdom draws attention to the places left vacant by

the fall of the apostate angels. Would it not be fitting to fill these places? And would not God receive great glory in time and in eternity if man were saved?

44. It seems to me that I hear the God of justice replying that the sentence of death and eternal damnation has been pronounced against man and his descendants, and it must be carried out without pardon or mercy, just as happened in the case of Lucifer and his followers. Man has shown himself ungrateful for the gifts he received, has followed the devil in pride and disobedience and should therefore follow him in his punishment, for sin must necessarily be punished.

45. Eternal Wisdom seeing that nothing on earth can expiate man's sin, that nothing can satisfy divine justice and appease God's anger and still, wishing to save unfortunate man whom he cannot help loving, finds a wonderful way of accomplishing this.

Wonder of wonders! With boundless and incomprehensible love, this tender-hearted Lord offers to comply with his justice, to calm the divine anger, to rescue us from the slavery of the devil and from the flames of hell, and to merit for us eternal happiness.

46. His offer is accepted; a decision is reached and made. Eternal Wisdom, the Son of God, will become man at a suitable time and in determined circumstances. For about four thousand years—from the creation of the world and Adam's sin until the Incarnation of divine Wisdom—Adam and his descendants were subject to death, just as God had decreed. But in view of the Incarnation of the Son of God, they received the graces they needed to obey his commandments and do salutary penance for any they might have transgressed. If they died in the state of grace and in God's friendship, their souls went to Limbo, there to await their Savior and Deliverer who would open the gates of heaven for them.

THE TIME BEFORE THE INCARNATION

47. During the whole time preceding his Incarnation, eternal Wisdom proved in a thousand ways his friendship for men and his great desire to bestow his favors on them and to converse with them. “My delight is to be with the children of men” (Prov. 8:31). He went about seeking those worthy of him (Wisd. 6:16), that is those worthy of his friendship, his precious gifts, his very person. He passed through different nations, making them prophets and friends of God (Wisd. 7:27; cf. 7:14). He it was who instructed all the holy patriarchs, all the friends of God, all the saints and prophets of the old and new testaments (Wisd. 7).

This same Wisdom inspired men of God and spoke by the mouths of the prophets. He directed their ways and enlightened them in their doubts. He upheld them in their weakness and freed them from all harm.

48. This is how the Holy Spirit tells it in the tenth chapter of the Book of Wisdom (Wisd. 10:1–21).

1. It was Wisdom who safeguarded Adam, the first man, created alone to be the father of all men.

2. He rescued him from his sin and gave him power to control and rule over all things.

3. When the sinful Cain in anger withdrew from Wisdom, he perished because through his fury he became the murderer of his brother.

4. When the Deluge flooded the earth, because of him, it was Wisdom again who saved it, piloting the just man Noah in a frail wooden ark.

5. When the nations conspired together to do evil, Wisdom discerned the just man, Abraham, preserved him in innocence before God and kept him resolute in overcoming the pity he felt for his son, Isaac.

6. Wisdom rescued the righteous man, Lot, when he fled from the company of wicked men who perished as fire descended upon the Five Cities.

7. Evidence of their wickedness still remains—a smoking wasteland, plants bearing fruit that never ripen, and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an unbelieving soul.

8. For those who neglected to see Wisdom were not only kept from knowledge of good, but they also left to mankind a memorial of their folly, and so their crime could never remain hidden.

49.9. But Wisdom delivered those who served him from all evils.

10. When the just man Jacob fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, Wisdom guided him along straight paths and showed him the kingdom of God. God gave him knowledge of holy things, prospered him in his labors and increased the fruits of his work.

11. He stood by him against the greed of defrauders and made him rich.

12. He protected him from his enemies and saved him from seducers. He gave him victory in his arduous struggle so that he might know that Wisdom is mightier than anything.

13. He did not abandon Joseph, the just man, when he was old, but delivered him from the hands of sinners and went down with him into the well.

14. He did not desert him in his chains until he brought him the scepter of royalty and authority over his oppressors. He showed those who had defamed him to be liars and gave him an eternal renown.

15. He liberated a holy people and a blameless race, the Hebrews, from a nation of oppressors.

16. He entered the soul of God's servant, Moses, and withstood fearsome kings with signs and wonders.

17. He gave the holy ones the reward of their labors, led them along a perfect way, and became a shelter for them by day and shed a starry light

upon them by night.

18. He brought them across the Red Sea and led them through the deep waters.

19. He submerged their enemies in the sea and gathered his own people up from the depths of the sea. Thus he carried off the spoils of the wicked.

20. They extolled you in their songs, O Lord, and together praised your conquering hand.

21. For Wisdom opened the mouths of the dumb and made the tongues of the babes speak with fluency.

50. In the next chapter of the Book of Wisdom (Wisd. 11) the Holy Spirit describes the various evils from which eternal Wisdom delivered Moses and the Israelites during the time they lived in the desert. To this we may add those who were delivered from great dangers by eternal Wisdom in the Old and New Testaments. Among them were Daniel who was freed from the lions' den, Susanna from the false crime she was accused of, the three young men from the furnace in Babylon, St Peter from prison, St John from the cauldron of boiling oil and numberless martyrs and confessors from the physical torments they were made to suffer and the calumnies which blackened their good name. All these were delivered and healed by eternal Wisdom. "O Lord, those who have pleased you from the beginning were healed by Wisdom (Wisd. 9:19).

CONCLUSION

51. And now let us proclaim: "A thousand times happy is the man into whose soul Wisdom has entered to have his abode! No matter what battles he has to wage, he will emerge victorious. No matter what dangers threaten him, he will escape unharmed. No matter what sorrows afflict him, he will find joy and consolation. No matter what humiliations are heaped upon him, he will be exalted and glorified in time and throughout eternity."

CHAPTER FIVE

MARVELLOUS EXCELLENCE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

52. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, the Holy Spirit shows the excellence of eternal Wisdom in terms so sublime and yet so clear that we need only quote them here, adding a few reflections.

53.1. “Wisdom reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and orders all things graciously.”

Nothing is so gracious as eternal Wisdom. Of his very nature he is gracious without bitterness; gracious to those who love him, never showing displeasure; gracious in his conduct, never showing severity. He is so gentle and unobtrusive that you might often think that he is not present when you meet with accidents and contradictions. But, possessed of invincible power, he quietly but effectively brings all things to a happy issue in ways unknown to men. After his example, the wise man should be graciously firm and firmly gracious—*suaviter fortis et fortiter suavis*.

54.2. “From my youth I have loved and sought him and desired to take him for my inseparable companion.”

Whoever wishes to find this precious treasure of Wisdom should, like Solomon, search for him (a) early and, if possible, while still young; (b) purely and spiritually as a chaste young man seeks a bride; (c) unceasingly, to the very end, until he has found him. It is certain that eternal Wisdom loves souls so much that he even espouses them, contracting with them a

true, spiritual marriage which the world cannot understand. History furnishes us with examples of this.

55.3. “Wisdom shows his glorious origin by being so intimately in union with God and by being loved by him who is Lord of all.”

Wisdom is God himself—such is his glorious origin. God the Father has testified that he is pleased with him proving how much Wisdom is loved (Cf. Chapter One and No. 98).

56.4. “Wisdom is the teacher of the knowledge of God and director of all his works.”

Eternal Wisdom alone enlightens every man that comes into this world (Jn. 1:9). He alone came from heaven to teach the secrets of God (Cf. Jn. 1:18; Mt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:10). We have no real teacher (Mt. 23:8,10) except the incarnate Wisdom, whose name is Jesus Christ. He alone brings all the works of God to perfection, especially the saints, for he shows them what they must do and teaches them to appreciate and put into practice all he has taught them.

57. 5. “If it is riches we seek in this life, who is richer than divine Wisdom who created all things?”

6. “If the mind of man can produce things, who is more able than the fashioner of everything that exists?”

7. “If someone loves holiness, again the great virtues are the handiwork of Wisdom, for he teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in this life is more useful than these.”

Solomon clearly shows that since we should love Wisdom alone, then from Wisdom alone we should expect all things—material goods, knowledge of nature’s secrets, all spiritual good, the theological and cardinal virtues.

58.8. “If anyone desires knowledge, eternal Wisdom knows the past and can forecast the future. He understands the subtleties of speech and the lessons

of parables. He recognizes signs and wonders and knows all that is going to happen as seasons and ages pass by.”

If anyone desires to possess a deep, holy and special knowledge of the treasures of grace and nature, and not merely dry, common and superficial knowledge, he must make every effort to acquire Wisdom. Without him, man is nothing in the sight of God, no matter how learned he may appear in the eyes of men. “He will count for nothing” (Wisd. 3:17).

59.9. “I therefore resolved to take him as my companion in life, knowing that he would share his goods with me and be my consolation in my cares and sorrows.”

Eternal Wisdom is so rich and generous; how can anyone who possesses him be poor? He is so gentle, attractive and tender; how can anyone who possesses him be unhappy? But among all those who seek eternal Wisdom how many can honestly say with Solomon, “I have resolved to possess him”? The majority of men do not make such a resolution with real sincerity. Their decisions are mere wishful thinking or at best weak and wavering resolves. That is why they never find eternal Wisdom.

60.10. “Through him, I shall be acclaimed among the people and, although still a youth, honored by the elders.”

11. “I shall be considered shrewd when I sit in judgment. The most powerful will be surprised when they see me and princes will show their admiration for me.”

12. “When I am silent, they will wait for me to speak; when I speak, they will pay attention to what I say. If I speak at some length, they will place their hands on their lips.”

13. “He it is who will give me immortality, and through him I shall leave an everlasting remembrance to those who come after me.”

14. “I shall govern people through him and nations shall be my subjects.”

St Gregory has this comment to make on Solomon's self-praise, " Those whom God has chosen to write his sacred words are filled with the Holy Spirit. In a way, they seem to rise above themselves and enter into the very one who possesses them. Thus they become mouthpieces of God himself, for they are concerned with God alone in everything they say, and they speak of themselves as though speaking of someone else."

61.15. "The most formidable kings shall be afraid when they hear of me. I shall show myself kind to my people and valiant in war."

16. "When I go home, I shall be at my ease with Wisdom, for his conversation is never disagreeable nor his company unpleasant. With him there is only contentment and joy."

17. "I thought about these things and I reflected in my heart that immortality is found in union with Wisdom."

18. "I found pure contentment in his friendship, inexhaustible wealth in his accomplishments, understanding in his teaching and conversation, and great joy listening to his counsels; and so I went about seeking him everywhere to make him my companion."

After summing up his previous commentary, Solomon draws this conclusion: "I went about seeking for eternal Wisdom in all directions." To possess him we must seek ardently; in other words, we must be ready to give up everything, to suffer everything, in order to obtain possession of him. Only a few find him because only a few look for him in a manner worthy of him.

62. In the seventh chapter of the Book of Wisdom, the Holy Spirit speaks of the excellence of eternal Wisdom in these terms: "In Wisdom there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, fruitful, subtle, eloquent, active, unsullied, lucid, gentle, benevolent, keen, irresistible, beneficent, kindly, firm, unfailing, unperturbed, all-powerful, all-seeing, possessing every spirit, understandable, pure and subtle. For Wisdom is more active than any active thing. He is so pure he penetrates all things" (Wisd. 7:22–24).

“Wisdom is an infinite treasure for men. Those who have utilized this treasure have become God’s friends, and praiseworthy for their gifts of knowledge.”

63 After reading such powerful but tender words which the Holy Spirit uses to show the beauty, the excellence and the treasures of eternal Wisdom, we cannot but love him and search for him with all our strength. All the more so since he is an inexhaustible source of riches for man who was made for him and infinitely eager to give himself to man.

CHAPTER SIX

EARNEST DESIRE OF DIVINE WISDOM TO GIVE HIMSELF TO MEN

64. The bond of friendship between eternal Wisdom and man is so close as to be beyond our understanding. Wisdom is for man and man is for Wisdom. “He is an infinite treasure for man,” (Wisd. 7:14) and not for angels or any other creatures.

Wisdom’s friendship for man arises from man’s place in creation, from his being an abridgement of eternal Wisdom’s marvels, his small yet ever so great world, his living image and representative on earth (cf. Nos. 35–38). Since Wisdom, out of an excess of love, gave himself up to death to save man, he loves man as a brother, a friend, a disciple, a pupil, the price of his own blood and co-heir of his kingdom. For man to withhold his heart from Wisdom or to wrench it away from him would constitute an outrage.

ETERNAL WISDOM’S LETTER OF LOVE

65. This eternal beauty, ever supremely loving, is so intent on winning man’s friendship that for this very purpose he has written a book in which he describes his own excellence and his desire for man’s friendship. This book reads like a letter written by a lover to win the affections of his loved one, for in it he expresses such ardent desires for the heart of man, such tender longings for man’s friendship, such loving invitations and promises, that you would say he could not possibly be the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and at the same time need the friendship of man to be happy.

66. In his pursuit of man, he hastens along the highways, or scales the loftiest mountain peaks, or waits at the city gates, or goes into the public squares and among the gatherings of people, proclaiming at the top of his voice, “You children of men, it is you I have been calling so persistently; it is you I am addressing; it is you I desire and seek; it is you I am claiming. Listen, draw close to me, for I want to make you happy” (Prov. 8:4).

And the better to attract men, Wisdom says to them, “It is through me and through my grace that kings reign, princes rule, monarchs and sovereigns bear the scepter and crown, I inspire legislators with the ability to enact just laws for the good of their people. I give magistrates the courage to administer justice fairly and fearlessly.”

67. “I love those who love me and those who seek me diligently find me,” and in finding me they will find good things in abundance. “For riches, glory, honors, dignities, real pleasure and true virtue are found in me; and it is far better for a man to possess me than to possess all the gold and silver, all the precious stones, and all the wealth of the whole universe. Those who come to me, I will lead along the paths of justice and prudence. I will enrich them with the inheritance due to rightful children and fulfill their greatest desires (cf. Prov. 8:15–21). Rest assured, it is my greatest pleasure and purest delight to converse and to abide with the children of men” (cf. Prov. 8:31).

68. “And now, my children, listen to me. Happy are those who keep my ways. Hear my instructions, be wise and do not ignore them. Happy is the man who listens to me, watching at my gates every day, waiting beside my door. He who finds me finds life and obtains salvation from the Lord, but he who sins against me, wounds his own soul. All who hate me love death” (Prov. 8:32–36).

69. Even though eternal Wisdom has spoken so kindly and so reassuringly to win the friendship of men, he still fears that they, filled with awe at his glorious state and sovereign majesty, will not dare approach him. That is why he tells them that “he is easily accessible, is quickly recognized by those who love him and is found by those who seek him; that he hastens to

meet those who desire him and that anyone who rises early to look for him will have no trouble, for he will find him sitting at his door, waiting for him” (Wisd. 6:13b-15).

INCARNATION, DEATH AND THE EUCHARIST

70. Finally, in order to draw closer to men and give them a more convincing proof of his love, eternal Wisdom went so far as to become man, even to become a little child, to embrace poverty and to die upon a cross for them.

How many times while here on earth could he be heard pleading, “Come to me, come to me, all of you. Do not be afraid, it is I. Why are you afraid? I am just like you; I love you. Are you afraid because you are sinners? But they are the very ones I am looking for; I am the friend of sinners. If it is because you have strayed from the fold through your own fault, then I am the good shepherd. If it is because you are weighted down with sin, covered with grime and utterly dejected, then that is just why you should come to me for I will unburden you, purify you and console you.”

71. Eternal Wisdom, on the one hand, wished to prove his love for man by dying in his place in order to save him, but on the other hand, he could not bear the thought of leaving him. So he devised a marvelous way of dying and living at the same time, and of abiding with man until the end of time. So, in order fully to satisfy his love, he instituted the sacrament of Holy Eucharist and went to the extent of changing and overturning nature itself.

He does not conceal himself under a sparkling diamond or some other precious stone, because he does not want to abide with man in an ostentatious manner. But he hides himself under the appearance of a small piece of bread—man’s ordinary nourishment—so that when received he might enter the heart of man and there take his delight. *Ardenter amantium hoc est*—Those who love ardently act in this way. “O eternal Wisdom,” says a saint, “O God who is truly lavish with himself in his desire to be with man.”

THE INGRATITUDE OF THOSE WHO REFUSE

72. How ungrateful and insensitive we would be if we were not moved by the earnest desire of eternal Wisdom, his eagerness to seek us out and the proofs he gives us of his friendship!

How cruel we would be, what punishment would we not deserve even in this world, if, instead of listening to him, we turn a deaf ear; if, instead of loving him, we spurn and offend him. The Holy Spirit tells us, “Those who neglected to acquire Wisdom not only inherited ignorance of what is good, but they actually left in the world a memorial of their folly in that their sins could not go unnoticed” (Wisd. 10:8).

Those who during their lifetime do not strive to acquire Wisdom suffer a triple misfortune. They fall (a) into ignorance and blindness, (b) into folly, (c) into sin and scandal.

But how unhappy they will be at the door of death when, despite themselves, they hear Wisdom reproach them, “I called you and you did not answer (Prov. 1:24). All the day long I held out my hands to you and you spurned me. Sitting at your door, I waited for you but you did not come to me. Now it is my turn to deride you (Prov. 1:26). No longer do I have ears to hear you weeping, eyes to see your tears, a heart to be moved by your sobs, or hands to help you.”

How great will be their misery in hell! Read what the Holy Spirit himself has to say about the miseries, the wailings, the regrets and the despair of the fools in hell who, all too late, realize their folly and misfortune in rejecting the eternal Wisdom of God. “They are now beginning to speak sensibly—but they are in hell” (Wisd. 5:14).

CONCLUSION

73. Above all else let us seek and long for divine Wisdom. “All other things that are desired are not to be compared with Wisdom” (Prov. 3:15). And again, “Nothing that you desire can be compared with him” (Prov. 8:11). You may desire the gifts of God and even heavenly treasures, but if you do not desire Wisdom you desire always something of far less worth.

If only we could realize what Wisdom actually is, i.e. an infinite treasure made for man—and I must confess that what I have said about him really amounts to nothing at all—we would be longing for him night and day. We would fly as fast as we could to the ends of the earth, we would cheerfully endure fire and sword, if need be, to merit this infinite treasure.

But we must beware of choosing a wrong wisdom, because there is more than one kind.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHOICE OF TRUE WISDOM

74. God himself has his Wisdom, the one and only true Wisdom which we should love and seek as a great treasure. The corrupt world also has its wisdom which must be condemned and detested, for it is evil and destructive. Philosophers also have their wisdom which must be spurned as useless for it can often endanger our salvation.

So far we have been speaking of God's wisdom to those who are spiritually mature, as the Apostle calls them (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6), but lest they be deceived by the false glitter of worldly wisdom, let us unmask its hypocrisy and malice.

WISDOM OF THE WORLD

75. The wisdom of the world is that of which it is said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (1 Cor. 1:19; cf. Is. 29:14), i.e. those whom the world calls wise." "The wisdom of the flesh is an enemy of God" (Rom. 8:7), and does not come from above. It is earthly, devilish and carnal (Jas. 3:15).

This worldly wisdom consists in an exact conformity to the maxims and fashions of the world; a continual inclination towards greatness and esteem; and a subtle and endless pursuit of pleasure and self-interest, not in an uncouth and blatant way by scandalous sin, but in an astute, discreet, and deceitful way. Otherwise the world would no longer label it wisdom but pure licentiousness.

76. In the opinion of the world, a wise man is one with a keen eye to business; who knows how to turn everything to his personal profit without

appearing to do so. He excels in the art of duplicity and well-concealed fraud without arousing suspicion. He thinks one thing and says or does another. Nothing concerning the graces and manners of the world is unknown to him. He accommodates himself to everyone to suit his own end, completely ignoring the honor and interests of God. He manages to make a secret but fatal reconciliation of truth and falsehood, of the gospel and the world, of virtue and sin, of Christ and Belial. He wishes to be considered an honest man but not a devout man, and most readily scorns, distorts and condemns devotions he does not personally approve of. In short, a man is worldly-wise who, following solely the lead of his senses and human reasoning, poses as a good Christian and a man of integrity, but makes little effort to please God or atone by penance for the sins he has committed against him.

77. The worldly man bases his conduct on personal honor, on “What will people say?,” on convention, on high living, on self-interest, on ceremonious manners, and on witty conversation. These seven principles are the irreproachable supports on which, he believes, he can safely depend to enjoy a peaceful life.

The world will canonize him for such virtues as courage, finesse, tactfulness, shrewdness, gallantry, politeness and good humor. It stigmatizes as serious offences, insensitiveness, stupidity, poverty, boorishness and bigotry.

78. He obeys as faithfully as he can the commandments which the world gives him:

You shall be well acquainted with the world.

You shall be respectable.

You shall be successful in business.

You shall hold on to whatever is yours.

You shall rise above your background.

You shall make friends for yourself.

You shall frequent fashionable society.

You shall seek the good life.

You shall not be a kill-joy.

You shall not be singular, uncouth or over-pious.

79. Never has the world been so corrupt as it is now, for never has it been so cunning, so wise in its own way, and so crafty. It cleverly makes use of the truth to foster untruth, virtue to justify vice, and the very maxims of Jesus Christ to endorse its own so that even those who are wisest in the sight of God are often deceived.

“Infinite is the number of these men, wise in the sight of the world but foolish in the eyes of God” (Eccles. 1:15).

80. Earthly wisdom of which St James speaks, is love for the things of this world. Worldly men secretly subscribe to this wisdom when they set their hearts on worldly possessions and strive to become rich. They institute court proceedings and engage in needless disputes to acquire wealth or hold on to it. Most of the time they are thinking, speaking, acting with the sole aim of acquiring or keeping some temporal possession. They pay little or no attention to their eternal salvation or to the means of saving their souls, such as Confession, Holy Communion, prayer, etc.; except in an offhand way out of routine, once in a while, and for the sake of appearances.

81. The wisdom of the flesh is the love of pleasure. This is the wisdom shown by the worldly-wise who seek only the satisfaction of the senses. They want to have a good time. They shun everything that might prove unpleasant or mortifying for the body, such as fasting, and other austerities. Usually they think only of eating, drinking, playing, laughing, enjoying life and having a good time. They must always be comfortable and insist on having entertaining pastimes, the best of food and good company.

They regale themselves with all these pleasures without the least scruple, with no disapproval from the world and no inconvenience to their health. Then they can go looking for some broad-minded confessor (that is how they describe lax confessors who shirk their duty) to obtain from him on easy terms the peaceful sanction for their soft and effeminate way of living and a generous pardon for their sins. I say “on easy terms” because these worldly people usually want as a penance only a few prayers or a small offering to the poor. They detest anything that could possibly cause them any bodily discomfort.

82. Diabolical wisdom is the love and esteem of honors. This is the wisdom of the worldly-wise who, secretly, of course, long for distinctions, honors, dignities and high offices. They strive to be seen, esteemed, praised and applauded by men. In their studies, their work, their undertakings, their words and actions, all they want is the esteem and praise of men, to be reputed as devout or learned people, as great leaders, eminent lawyers, men of great and distinguished merit or deserving of high consideration. They cannot bear insult or blame and so they hide their shortcomings and parade their better qualities.

83. We must, like our Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate Wisdom, detest and condemn these three kinds of false wisdom if we are to possess the true one, which is not self-seeking, not found in the world nor in the heart of those who lead a comfortable life, and which loathes everything that men consider great and noble.

NATURAL WISDOM

84. Besides worldly wisdom, which is pernicious and must be condemned, there is the natural wisdom of philosophers.

It was this natural wisdom that the Egyptians and Greeks eagerly sought for, “The Greeks look for wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:22). Those who had acquired this wisdom were called magi or wise men. This wisdom consists in an eminent knowledge of nature in its primary elements. It was given in full to

Adam before the Fall. It was conferred on Solomon, and down through the ages many great men have received it, as history testifies.

85. Philosophers boast that their wisdom is acquired through philosophical argumentation. Alchemists boast of cabalistic secrets for finding the philosopher's stone in which, they imagine, this wisdom is to be found.

It is true that scholastic philosophy, when studied in a truly Christian way, develops the mind and enables it to understand the higher sciences, but it will never confer that so-called natural wisdom which the ancients prided themselves on possessing.

86. The science of alchemists, which purports to teach that natural bodies can be reduced to their basic principles, is still more worthless and dangerous. This science, although valid in itself, has duped and deceived multitudes of people regarding the end it proposes to attain. Judging by my own experience, I am sure that the devil is using this false science to cause a loss of money and time, as well as grace, and even the soul itself, under the pretext of finding the philosopher's stone. No other science claims to accomplish such great effects by such obvious means.

This science claims to produce the philosopher's stone or a powder (which they call "projection") which, when thrown upon any metal in a liquid state, will change it into silver or gold, which will restore health, cure illnesses, even prolong life, and effect countless marvels which ignorant people believe are divine and miraculous.

There is a group of people who consider themselves experts in this science and who are called "Cabalists" and these keep such a close guard on the hidden mysteries of this science that they would rather lose their life than reveal its so-called secrets.

87. They justify what they teach by:

(1) The history of Solomon, whom they firmly believe had been given the secret of the philosopher's stone, and as proof they produce a secret book which is false and insidious, entitled "The Clavicle of Solomon."

(2) The history of Esdras, to whom God gave a heavenly liquid to drink and which gave him “wisdom,” as is related in the seventh book of Esdras.

(3) The history of Raymond Lully and of several great philosophers who say they have found this philosopher’s stone.

(4) Finally, the better to cover their imposture with a cloak of piety, they call it a gift of God, which is given only to those who have persevered in asking for it and who have merited it by their works and prayers.

88. I have given an account of the fantasies or illusions of this futile science so that like many others you may not be deceived. I know that some who, after having spent so much money and wasted so much time, under the most laudable and pious pretexts in the world and in a most devoted manner, have finally regretted everything and confessed their pretence and their delusions.

I do not admit that the philosopher’s stone is a possibility. A learned man named Del Rio is certain it is and has given proofs; others deny it. Be that as it may, it is not befitting, it is even dangerous, for a Christian to occupy himself in seeking it. It would be an insult to Jesus Christ, Wisdom incarnate, in whom are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God (Col. 2:3) as well as every gift of nature, grace and glory. It implies disobedience to the Holy Spirit who tells us in Ecclesiasticus 3: “Do not seek what is beyond your capabilities” (Sir. 3:22).

CONCLUSION

89. So let us remain with Jesus, the eternal and incarnate Wisdom. Apart from him, there is nothing but aimless wandering, untruth and death. “I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life” (Jn. 14:6). Now let us see the effects of Wisdom in souls.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARVELLOUS EFFECTS OF WISDOM IN THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO POSSESS HIM

90. Eternal Wisdom, ever transcendent in beauty, by nature loves everything that is good, especially the good of man (Wisd. 7:22), and consequently nothing gives him more pleasure than to communicate himself. That is why the Holy Spirit tells us that Wisdom is for ever seeking throughout the world for souls worthy of him (Wisd. 6:17), and he fills these holy souls with his presence making them “friends of God and prophets” (Wisd. 7:27).

In former times he entered into the soul of God’s servant Moses and filled him with abundant light to see great things, and endowed him with prodigious power to work miracles and gain victories. “He entered the soul of the servant of God and withstood fearsome kings with signs and wonders” (Wisd. 10:16).

When divine Wisdom enters a soul, he brings all kinds of good things with him and bestows vast riches upon that soul. “All good things came to me along with him and untold riches from his hand” (Wisd. 7:11). This is Solomon’s own testimony to the truth after he had received Wisdom.

91. Among the countless effects eternal Wisdom produces in souls, often in such a secret way that the soul is not aware of them, the most usual are the following:

92. (1) Eternal Wisdom communicates his Spirit of enlightenment to the soul that possesses him, “I prayed, and understanding was given to me. I

pleaded and the spirit of wisdom came upon me” (Wisd. 7:7). This subtle and penetrating spirit (cf. Wisd. 7:22–24) enables a man, as it enabled Solomon, to judge all things with keen discernment and deep penetration. “Because of Wisdom, who communicated his spirit to me, I shall be found keen in judgment and even the great shall be surprised in my presence” (Wisd. 8:11).

93. Eternal Wisdom communicates to man the great science of holiness as well as the natural sciences, and even the most secret ones when they are needed. “If anyone desires deep knowledge, eternal Wisdom knows the past and can forecast the future. He understands the subtleties of speech and the lessons of parables” (Wisd. 8:8). To Jacob he gave the science of the saints (Wisd. 10:10). To Solomon he gave a true knowledge of the whole of nature (Wisd. 7:17). He revealed to him countless secrets that no one before him had ever known (Wisd. 7:21).

94. From this infinite source of light the great Doctors of the Church, like St Thomas (as he himself testifies) drew that eminent knowledge for which they are renowned. Note that this enlightened understanding given by eternal Wisdom is not dry, barren and unspiritual, but radiating splendor, unction, vigor and devotion. It moves and satisfies the heart at the same time as it enlightens the mind.

95. (2) Wisdom gives man not only light to know the truth but also a remarkable power to impart it to others. “Wisdom has the voice to convey knowledge” (Wisd. 1:7). Wisdom knows what we want to say and communicates to us the art of saying it well, for “he opened the mouths of those who were dumb and made the tongues of babies eloquent” (Wisd. 10:21).

He cured Moses of his impediment of speech (cf. Ex. 4:10–12). He imparted his words to the prophets, enabling them “to root up and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10), although they acknowledged that left to themselves they could speak no better than children (Jer. 1:6).

It was eternal Wisdom who gave the apostles the facility they had to preach the gospel everywhere and to proclaim the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). “He made their mouths a real treasury of words.”

Since divine Wisdom is the Word of God throughout time and eternity, he has never ceased speaking and by his word everything was made and everything was restored (cf. Jn. 1:3- 13). He spoke through the mouths of the prophets and apostles (Cf. No. 47) and he will go on speaking through the mouths of those to whom he gives himself until the end of time.

96. But the words that divine Wisdom communicates are not just ordinary, natural, human words; they are divine, “truly the words of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). They are powerful, touching, piercing words, “sharper than a two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), words that go from the heart of the one through whom he speaks straight to the heart of the listener. Solomon is referring to this gift of Wisdom he himself had received when he said that God gave him the grace to speak according to the feelings of his heart (Wisd. 7:15).

97. These are the words which our Lord promised to his apostles, “I will give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist” (Lk. 21:15).

How few preachers there are today who possess this most wonderful gift of eloquence and who can say with St Paul, “We preach the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 2:7). Most of them speak according to the natural light of their minds, or from what they have taken from books. They do not speak under the impulse of divine Wisdom or from a heart filled to overflowing with wisdom (Mt. 12:34). That is why in these times we see so few conversions made through preaching. If a preacher had truly received from eternal Wisdom this gift of eloquence, his listeners would hardly be able to resist his words, as happened in the early days of the Church: “They could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit speaking in him” (Acts 6:10). Such a preacher would speak with so much unction and such authority (Mk. 1:22) that his words could never be ineffectual and void (cf. Is. 55:10–11).

98. (3) Eternal Wisdom, besides being the object of the eternal Father's delight, and the joy of angels (cf. Nos. 10,19,55), is also the source of purest joy and consolation for man who possesses him. He gives to man a relish for everything that comes from God and makes him lose his taste for things created. He enlightens his mind with the brightness of his own light and pours into his heart an indescribable joy, sweetness and peace even when he is in the midst of the most harrowing grief and suffering, as St Paul bears witness when he exclaims, "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. 7:4).

Whenever I go into my house, says Solomon, even though I am alone, I will take my rest with Wisdom because Wisdom's company is always pleasing, his companionship is never tedious but always satisfying and joyful (Wisd. 8:16). And not only at home did I find joy in conversing with him, but everywhere and in everything, because Wisdom went before me (Wisd. 7:12). There is a true and holy joy in Wisdom's friendship (Wisd. 8:18), while the joys and pleasures we find in created things are illusory, leading only to affliction of spirit.

99. (4) When eternal Wisdom communicates himself to a soul, he gives that soul all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and all the great virtues to an eminent degree. They are: the theological virtues—lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity; the cardinal virtues—well-ordered temperance, complete prudence, perfect justice, invincible fortitude; the moral virtues—perfect religion, profound humility, pleasing gentleness, blind obedience, complete detachment, continuous mortification, sublime prayer, etc. These are the wonderful virtues and heavenly gifts described briefly by the Holy Spirit when he says, "If anyone loves justice, great virtues are again Wisdom's handiwork, for he teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude. Nothing in the world is more useful to man in this life than these" (Wisd. 8:7).

100. (5) Finally, as "nothing is more active than Wisdom" (Wisd. 7:24), he does not leave those who enjoy his friendship to languish in mediocrity and negligence. He sets them on fire, inspiring them to undertake great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In order to discipline them

and make them more worthy of himself, he permits them to engage in strenuous conflicts and in almost everything they undertake they encounter contradictions and disappointments.

At times, he allows the devil to tempt them, the world to calumniate and scorn them, their enemies to defeat and crush them, their friends and relatives to forsake and betray them. Sometimes they may have to suffer illness or loss of possessions, and at other times endure insults, sadness and heartbreak. In short, Wisdom tests them thoroughly in the crucible of tribulation like god is tested in a furnace.

“But their affliction,” says the Holy Spirit, “was light and their reward will be great, for God has put them to the test and found them worthy of himself. He has tried them like gold in a furnace and accepted them as sacrificial victims. When the time comes, he will look upon them with favor” (Wisd. 3:4,6).

It is Wisdom who enriched the virtuous man in his labors and enabled him to reap the fruit of his toil. He came to his aid against those who were trying to deceive him and made him prosperous. He protected him against his enemies, shielded him against seducers and engaged him in combat so that he might come through victorious and so convince him that Wisdom is more powerful than anything in the world (Wisd. 10:10).

101. We read in the life of Blessed Henry Suso, a Dominican friar, that in his eagerness to possess Wisdom, he often offered himself to undergo any torment in return for his friendship. One day he said to himself, “Do you not know that lovers endure suffering upon suffering for the sake of the one they love? For them wakeful nights are pleasant, fatigue is delightful, labor is restful, once they are assured that the one they love is pleased and grateful. If men go to such lengths to please a mere mortal, are you not ashamed to show weakness in your resolve to obtain Wisdom? No, eternal Wisdom, I will never falter in my love for you, even though I have to plunge through thicket and bush to reach you, even though I have to undergo a thousand torments in body and soul. I will always prize your

friendship more than anything else on earth and you will always have the first place in my affections.”

102. While traveling a few days later, he fell into the hands of robbers who beat him so unmercifully that they themselves could not help pitying him. Seeing himself in such a state, Henry Suso forgot his resolution to be brave no matter what might happen and gave way to deep depression, weeping and wondering why God had afflicted him in this way. As he pondered over his plight, he fell asleep. Early next morning he heard a voice reproaching him, “Look at this warrior of mine. He can scale mountains, climb over rocks, break into strongholds, cut to pieces his enemies when everything is going right for him. But when he meets with adversity his courage fades and he is helpless and useless. In time of consolation he is a fierce lion, but in time of tribulation he is a timid deer. Wisdom does not share his friendship with such faint-hearted cowards.”

At this reprimand, Blessed Henry confessed he was wrong in giving way to excessive discouragement, and went on to ask divine Wisdom to allow him to weep and so unburden his heart weighed down by grief.

“No,” replied the voice, “all the saints in heaven would lose their respect for you,. were you to cry like a baby or a woman. Wipe away your tears and show the world a cheerful face.”

103. The cross, then, is the portion and reward of those who desire or already possess eternal Wisdom. But our loving Savior numbers, weighs and measures everything and sends crosses to his friends in proportion to their strength, and tempers them with divine unction to such an extent that their hearts are filled with joy.

CHAPTER NINE

THE INCARNATION AND LIFE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

THE INCARNATION

104. When the eternal Word, eternal Wisdom, decided in the grand council of the Blessed Trinity (cf. Nos. 41–46) to become man in order to restore fallen humanity, it is possible he made it known to Adam, and Scripture tells us he promised the patriarchs of the Old Law that he would become man in order to redeem the world.

This explains why, during the 4,000 years since the creation of the world, all the holy people of the Old Law pleaded earnestly in their prayers for the coming of the Messiah. They groaned, they wept and cried out, “Clouds, rain forth the just one. Earth, bud forth the Savior” (cf. Is. 45:8). “O Wisdom, who proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, come bring us deliverance.”

But their cries, their prayers, and their sacrifices had not the power to draw the Son of God, Wisdom Eternal, from the bosom of his Father. They reached out towards heaven but their arms were not long enough to reach the throne of the Most High. They offered the sacrifice of their hearts unceasingly to God but they were not worthy enough to obtain the greatest of all graces.

105. At last, when the time appointed for the redemption of mankind came, eternal Wisdom built himself a house worthy to be his dwelling-place (Prov. 9:1). He created the most holy Virgin, forming her in the womb of St Anne

with even greater delight than he had derived from creating the universe. It is impossible on the one hand to put into words the gifts with which the Blessed Trinity endowed this most fair creature, or on the other hand to describe the faithful care with which she corresponded to the graces of her Creator.

106. The torrential outpouring of God's infinite goodness which had been rudely stemmed by the sins of men since the beginning of the world, was now released precipitately and in full flood into the heart of Mary. Eternal Wisdom gave to her all the graces which Adam and his descendants would have received so liberally from him had they remained in their original state of justice. The fullness of God, says a saint, was poured into Mary, in so far as a mere creature is capable of receiving it. O Mary, masterpiece of the Most High, miracle of eternal Wisdom, prodigy of the Almighty, abyss of grace! I join all the saints in the belief that only the God who created you knows the height, the breadth and the depth of the grace he has conferred on you.

107. During the first fourteen years of her life the most holy Virgin Mary grew so marvelously in the grace and wisdom of God and responded so faithfully to his love that the angels and even God himself were filled with rapturous admiration for her. Her humility, deep as an abyss, delighted him. Her purity so other-worldly drew him down to her. He found her lively faith and her ceaseless entreaties of love so irresistible that he was lovingly conquered by her appeals of love. "So great was the love of Mary," explains St Augustine, "that it conquered the omnipotent God"—O quantus amor illius qui vincit omnipotentem.

Wondrous to relate, this divine Wisdom chose to leave the bosom of his Father and enter the womb of a virgin and there repose amid the lilies of her purity. Desiring to give himself to her by becoming man in her, he sent the archangel Gabriel to greet her on his behalf and to declare to her that she had won his heart and he would become man within her if she gave her consent. The archangel fulfilled his mission and assured her that she would still remain a virgin while becoming a mother. Notwithstanding her desire to be lowly, Mary wholeheartedly gave the angel that priceless consent

which the Blessed Trinity, all the angels and the whole world awaited for so many centuries. Humbling herself before her Creator she said” “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38).

108. Notice that at the very moment Mary consented to become the Mother of God, several miraculous events took place. The Holy Spirit formed from the most pure blood of Mary’s heart a little body which he fashioned into a perfect living being: God created the most perfect soul that ever could be created. Eternal Wisdom, the Son of God, drew the body and soul into union with his person. Here we have the great wonder of heaven and earth, the prodigious excess of the love of God. “The Word was made flesh” (Jn. 1:14). Eternal Wisdom became incarnate. God became man without ceasing to be God. This God-man is Jesus Christ and his name means Savior.

LIFE OF WISDOM INCARNATE

109. Here is a summary of his divine life on earth:

1. He wished to be born of a married woman, though she was indeed a virgin, lest he should be reproached as one born out of wedlock. Other important reasons are given by Fathers of the Church. His conception, as we have just said, was announced to the Blessed Virgin by the angel Gabriel. He became a child of Adam without inheriting Adam’s sin.

110.2. His conception took place on Friday, 25th March, and on 25th December the Savior of the world was born at Bethlehem and was cradled in a manger in a poor stable. An angel brought the news of the Savior’s birth to shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks in the fields. He invited them to go to Bethlehem to adore their Savior. At the same time they heard celestial music, voices of angels singing, “Glory to God in the heavens and peace on earth to men who are God’s friends” (Lk. 2:14).

111.3. On the eighth day after his birth, as prescribed by the Law of Moses, he was circumcised, even though he was not subject to the law, and he was called Jesus, the name that came from heaven. Three wise men came from

the east to adore him having learnt of his birth through the appearance of an extraordinary star which guided them to Bethlehem. This event is celebrated on 6th January, the feast of the Epiphany, that is, the manifestation of God.

112.4. Forty days after his birth he chose to offer himself in the Temple, observing all that the Law of Moses prescribed for the redeeming of the first-born. Some time later the angel told St Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin, to take the infant Jesus and his Mother into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. This he did. Some authors hold the opinion that our Lord stayed in Egypt for two years; others say for three, and others such as Baronius, think it was as many as eight years. He sanctified the whole of the country by his presence by making it worthy to be dwelt in by the holy hermits, as history has shown. Eusebius tells us that at the approach of Jesus the devils took to flight, and St Athanasius adds that the idols toppled over.

113.5. At the age of twelve the Son of God, sitting among the doctors, questioned them with such wisdom that all his hearers were filled with admiration. After this incident the gospel makes no mention of him until his baptism when he was thirty years old. He then retired into the desert, abstaining from food and drink for forty days. There he fought the devil and vanquished him.

114.6. After this he began to preach in Judea, choosing his apostles and working all the miracles related in the gospels. I need only mention that Jesus during the third year of his public preaching and at the age of thirty-three, raised Lazarus from the dead, made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the 29th day of March, and on the 2nd day of April which was Thursday, the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, celebrated the Pasch with his disciples, washed the feet of the apostles and instituted the sacrament of the holy Eucharist under the species of bread and wine.

115.7. On the evening of this day he was apprehended by his enemies with Judas the traitor at their head. The next day, 3rd April, even though it was a feast-day of the Jews, he was condemned to death after being scourged, crowned with thorns, and treated most shamefully.

That same day he was led to Calvary and nailed to a cross between two criminals. The God of all innocence thus chose to die the most shameful of all deaths and undergo the torments which should have been incurred by a robber named Barabbas whom the Jews had preferred to him. The ancient Fathers believed that Jesus was attached to the cross by four nails and that there was in the middle of the cross a wooden support on which his body rested.

116.8. After languishing for three hours, the Savior of the world died at the age of thirty-three. Joseph of Arimathea had the courage to ask Pilate for the body and laid it in a new sepulcher which he had built. We must not forget that nature showed its sorrow at the death of its maker by many marvelous happenings which took place at the moment of his death. He rose from the dead on the fifth day of April and appeared several times to his Mother and his disciples during forty days. On Thursday, 14th May, he took his disciples to Mount Olivet and there in their presence, by his own power he ascended into heaven to take his place at the right hand of his Father, leaving on this earth the imprint of his sacred feet.

CHAPTER TEN

THE CAPTIVATING BEAUTY AND THE INEXPRESSIBLE GENTLENESS OF INCARNATE WISDOM

117. As the divine Wisdom became man only to stir the hearts of men to love and imitate him, he took pleasure in gracing his human nature with every kind of quality, especially an endearing gentleness and a kindness without any defect or blemish.

WISDOM IS GENTLE IN HIS ORIGIN

118. If we consider him in his origin he is everything that is good and gentle. He is a gift sent by the love of the eternal Father and a product of the love of the Holy Spirit. He was given out of love and fashioned by love (Jn. 3:16). He is therefore all love, or rather the very love of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He was born of the sweetest, tenderest and the most beautiful of all mothers, Mary, the divinely favored Virgin. To appreciate the gentleness of Jesus we must first consider the gentleness of Mary, his Mother, whom he resembles by his pleasing nature. Jesus is Mary's child; consequently there is no haughtiness, or harshness, or unpleasantness in him and even less, infinitely less, in him than in his Mother, since he is the eternal Wisdom and therefore pure gentleness and beauty.

HE IS DECLARED GENTLE BY THE PROPHETS

119. The prophets, who had in advance been shown the incarnate Wisdom, referred to him as a sheep and a lamb because of his gentleness. They foretold that because of his gentleness “he would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax” (Is. 42:3). He is so full of kindness that even if a poor sinner be weighed down, blinded, and depraved by his sins, with already, as it were, one foot in hell, he will not condemn him unless the sinner compels him to do so.

St John the Baptist for almost thirty years lived in the desert practicing austerities to gain the knowledge and love of incarnate Wisdom. No sooner had he seen Jesus approaching than he pointed him out to his disciples, exclaiming, “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.” (Jn. 1:29). He did not say, as seemingly he should, “Behold the Most High, behold the King of Glory, behold the Almighty.” But knowing him more thoroughly than any man at any time, he said: Behold the Lamb of God, behold that eternal Wisdom who, to captivate our hearts and to take away our sins, has gathered into his person all that is meek in God and in man, in heaven and on earth.

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS NAME

120. But what does the name of Jesus, the proper name of incarnate Wisdom signify to us if not ardent charity, infinite love and engaging gentleness? The distinctive characteristic of Jesus, the Savior of the world, is to love and save men. “No song is sweeter, no voice is more pleasing, no thought is more appealing, than Jesus Son of God.” How sweet the name of Jesus sounds to the ear and the heart of a chosen soul! Sweet as honey to the lips, a delightful melody to the ears, thrilling joy to the heart.

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS LOOKS

121. “Gentle is Jesus in his looks, and in his words and actions.” The face of our loving Savior is so serene and gentle that it charmed the eyes and hearts of those who beheld it. The shepherds who came to the stable to see him were so spellbound by the serenity and beauty of his face that they tarried for many days gazing in rapture upon him. The three Kings, proud

though they were, had no sooner seen the tender features of this lovely child than, forgetting their high dignity, they fell down on their knees beside his crib. Time and again they said to one another, “Friend, how good it is to be here! There are no enjoyments in our palaces comparable to those we are experiencing in this stable looking at this dear Infant-God.”

When Jesus was still very young, children and people in trouble came from the country around to see him and find comfort and joy. They would say to each other, “Let us go and see young Jesus, the lovely child of Mary.” St John Chrysostom says, “The beauty and majesty of his face were at once so sweet and so worthy of respect that those who knew him could not prevent themselves from loving him, and distant kings, hearing of his beauty, desired to have a painting of him. It is even said that our Lord by special favor sent his portrait to King Abogare. Some writers tell us that the Roman soldiers and the Jews covered his face in order to strike and buffet him freely because there was in his eyes and face such a kindly and ravishing radiance as would disarm the most cruel of men.

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS WORDS

122. Jesus is also gentle in his words. When he dwelt on earth he won everyone over by his gentle speech. Never was he heard to raise his voice or argue heatedly. The prophets foretold this of him (Is. 42:2). Those who listened to him with good intentions were charmed by the words of life which fell from his lips and they exclaimed, “No man has ever spoken as this man” (Jn. 7:46). Even those who hated him were so surprised at his eloquence and wisdom that they asked one another, “Where did he get such wisdom?” (Mt. 13:54). No man has ever spoken with such meekness and unction. “Where did he acquire such wisdom in his speech?” they asked.

Multitudes of poor people left their homes and families and went even as far as the desert to hear him, going several days without food or drink, for his gentle words were food enough for them. The apostles were led to follow him by his kindly manner of speaking. His words healed the incurable and comforted the afflicted. He spoke only one word,—“Mary”—

to the grief-stricken Mary Magdalene and she was overwhelmed with joy and happiness.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GENTLENESS OF THE INCARNATE WISDOM IN HIS ACTIONS

HE IS GENTLE IN HIS ACTIONS

123. Finally, Jesus is gentle in his actions and in the whole conduct of his life. “He did everything well” (Mt. 7:37), which means that everything he did was done with such uprightness, wisdom, holiness and gentleness that nothing faulty or distorted could be found in him. Let us consider what gentleness our loving Savior always manifested in his conduct.

124. Poor people and little children followed him everywhere seeing him as one of their own. The simplicity, the kindliness, the humble courtesy and the charity they witnessed in our dear Savior made them press close about him. One day when he was preaching in the streets the children who were usually about him, pressed upon him from behind. The apostles who were nearest to our Lord pushed them back. On seeing this Jesus rebuked his apostles and said to them, “Do not keep the children away from me” (Mt. 19:14). When they gathered about him he embraced and blessed them with gentleness and kindness.

The poor, on seeing him poorly dressed and simple in his ways, without ostentation or haughtiness, felt at ease with him. They defended him against the rich and the proud when these calumniated and persecuted him, and he in his turn praised and blessed them on every occasion.

125. But how describe the gentleness of Jesus in his dealings with poor sinners: his gentleness with Mary Magdalene, his courteous solicitude in

turning the Samaritan woman from her evil ways, his compassion in pardoning the adulterous woman taken in adultery, his charity in sitting down to eat with public sinners in order to win them over? Did not his enemies seize upon his great kindness as a pretext to persecute him, saying that his gentleness only encouraged others to transgress the law of Moses, and tauntingly called him the friend of sinners and publicans? With what kindness and concern did he not try to win over the heart of Judas who had decided to betray him, even when Jesus was washing his feet and calling him his friend! With what charity he asked God his Father to pardon his executioners, pleading their ignorance as an excuse.

126. How beautiful, meek and charitable is Jesus, the incarnate Wisdom! Beautiful from all eternity, he is the splendor of his Father, the unspotted mirror and image of his goodness. He is more beautiful than the sun and brighter than light itself. He is beautiful in time, being formed by the Holy Spirit pure and faultless, fair and immaculate, and during his life he charmed the eyes and hearts of men and is now the glory of the angels. How loving and gentle he is with men, and especially with poor sinners whom he came upon earth to seek out in a visible manner, and whom he still seeks in an invisible manner every day.

HE CONTINUES TO BE GENTLE IN HEAVEN

127. Do you think that Jesus, now that he is triumphant and glorious, is any the less loving and condescending? On the contrary, his glory, as it were, perfects his kindness. He wishes to appear forgiving rather than majestic, to show the riches of his mercy rather than the gold of his glory.

128. Read the accounts of his apparitions and you will see that when Wisdom incarnate and glorified showed himself to his friends, he did not appear accompanied by thunder and lightning but in a kindly and gentle manner. He did not assume the majesty of a King or of the Lord of hosts, but the tenderness of a spouse and the kindliness of a friend. On some occasions he has shown himself in the Blessed Sacrament, but I cannot remember having read that he ever did so otherwise than in the form of a gentle and beautiful child.

129. Not long ago an unhappy man, enraged because he had lost all his money at gambling, drew his sword against heaven, blaming our Lord for the loss of his money. Then, instead of thunderbolts and fiery darts falling upon this man, there came fluttering down from the sky a little piece of paper. Quite taken aback, he caught the paper, opened it and read, "O God, have mercy on me." The sword fell from his hands, and, stirred to the depths of his heart, he fell on his knees and begged for mercy.

130. St Denis the Areopagite relates that a certain bishop, Carpas by name, had, after a great deal of trouble, converted a pagan. On hearing afterwards that a fellow-pagan had lost no time in making the new convert abjure the faith, Carpas earnestly prayed to God all night to wreak vengeance and punishment upon the guilty one for his attack on the supreme authority of God. Suddenly, when his fervor and his entreaties were reaching their peak, he saw the earth opening and on the brink of hell he saw the apostate and the pagan whom the demons were trying to drag into the abyss. Then lifting up his eyes, he saw the heavens open and Jesus Christ accompanied by a multitude of angels coming to him and saying, "Carpas, you asked me for vengeance, but you do not know me. You do not realize what you are asking for, nor what sinners have cost me. Why do you want me to condemn them? I love them so much that if it were necessary I would be ready to die again for each one of them." Then our Lord approached Carpas, and, uncovering his shoulders, said to him, "Carpas, if you want to take vengeance, strike me rather than these poor sinners."

131. With this knowledge of eternal Wisdom, shall we not love him who has loved us and still loves us more than his own life; and whose beauty and meekness surpass all that is loveliest and most attractive in heaven and on earth?

132. We read in the life of Blessed Henry Suso that one day the eternal Wisdom, whom he so ardently desired, appeared to him. It happened in this way. Our Lord appeared in human form surrounded by a bright transparent cloud and seated upon a throne of ivory. A brightness like the rays of the sun at noonday radiated from his eyes and face. The crown he wore signified eternity; his robe blessedness; his word meekness; his embrace the

fullness of bliss possessed by all the blessed. Henry contemplated this spectacle of the divine Wisdom. What surprised him most was to see Jesus at one moment appearing as a young maiden of incomparable heavenly and earthly beauty and, at the next moment, appearing as a young man who, judging from his face, would seem to have espoused all that is beautiful in God's creation. Sometimes he saw him raise his head higher than the heavens and at the same time tread the chasms of the earth. Sometimes he looked wholly majestic and at other times condescending, gentle, meek and full of tenderness for those who came to him. Then he turned to Henry and said with a smile, "My son, give me your heart" (Prov. 23:26). At once Henry threw himself at his feet and offered him for all time the gift of his heart.

Following the example of this holy man, let us offer eternal Wisdom for all time the gift of our heart. That is all he asks for.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PRINCIPAL UTTERANCES OF WISDOM INCARNATE WHICH WE MUST BELIEVE AND PRACTISE IF WE ARE TO BE SAVED

133.1. If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Lk. 9:23.

2. If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. Jn. 14:23.

3. If you present your gift at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go make peace with your brother. Mt. 23:24.

134.4. If someone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Lk. 14:26.

5. Whoever has left his house, or brothers or sisters, or children, or inheritance, out of love for me, will receive a hundredfold reward and will possess eternal life. Mt. 19:29.

6. If you wish to be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Mt. 19:21.

135.7. Not everyone who cries out to me, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who obeys the will of my heavenly Father will enter there. Mt. 7:21.

8. Whoever hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who builds upon solid rock. Mt. 7:24.

9. I tell you solemnly, if you do not change and become as children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Mt. 18:3.

10. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls. Mt. 11:29.

136.11. When you pray, beware of acting like those hypocrites who love to stand and pray in their synagogues so that men may notice them. Mt. 6:5.

12. Of what use is it when you pray to use many words, since your heavenly Father knows your needs before you place them before him. Mt. 6:7.

13. As you prepare to pray, forgive your neighbor the wrongs he may have committed against you so that your heavenly Father may show mercy to you. Mk. 11:25.

14. When you ask God in prayer for anything, believe that you will receive it, and you will indeed receive it. Mk. 11:24.

137.15. When you are fasting, do not imitate those gloomy hypocrites who go about looking worn out to show others they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have already received their reward. Mt. 6:16.

138.16. There will be greater rejoicing in heaven when one sinner is seen to be penitent than when ninety-nine just people show no repentance. Lk. 15:7.

17. I have not come to call the just, but to call sinners and draw them to repentance. Lk. 5:32.

139.18. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mt. 5:10.

19. Blessed are you when men hate you and reject you from their company because of the Son of man; rejoice, for your reward will be great in heaven. Lk. 6:22.

20. If the world hates you and persecutes you, recall that it hated me before you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because I have chosen you, it will hate you. Jn. 15:18.

140.21. Come to me all you who are afflicted and heavily- burdened and I will refresh you. Mt. 11:28.

22. I am the bread of life come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live for ever, and the bread that I give is my flesh. Jn. 6:51.

23. My food is the real food and my blood is the real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. Jn. 6:55,56.

141.24. You will be hated by all men because of me, but I promise you, not a single hair of your head will be lost. Lk. 21:17–18.

142.25. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will uphold one and despise the other. Mt. 6:24.

143.26. Evil thoughts which come from the heart make a person unclean: but eating with unwashed hands does not make a person unclean. Mt. 15:19.

27. A good man draws only what is good from his store of goodness; but the wicked man can only draw what is evil from his store. Mt. 12:35.

144.28. No one is worthy of the kingdom of God, if, after putting his hand to the plough, he looks behind him. Lk. 9:62.

29. Every hair of your head is counted; so never fear, you are worth more than many sparrows. Lk. 12:7.

30. God did not send his son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but that he might save the world. Jn. 3:17.

145.31. Every man who does evil avoids the light; he is afraid his evil deeds will be exposed. Jn. 3:20.

32. God is a spirit and those who adore him must do so in spirit and in truth. Jn. 4:24.

33. It is the spirit that gives life to everything; the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are words of life. Jn. 6:63.

34. Whoever commits sin becomes the servant and slave of sin, and the servant does not remain in the house for ever. Jn. 8:34–35.

35. Whoever is faithful in small things will be faithful in the greater; and whoever is dishonest in small things will be yet more dishonest in greater things. Lk. 16:10.

36. It is more likely that heaven and earth should perish than that one detail of the law should not be accomplished. Lk. 16:17.

37. Your light must shine before men so that they will see your good works and they will glorify your Father who is in heaven. Mt. 5:16.

146.38. If your virtue is no better than that of the scribes and pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Mt. 5:20.

39. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; for it is better for you to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. Mt. 5:29.

40. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and only those who are violent can take it by force. Mt. 11:12.

41. Do not store up a treasure on earth to be destroyed by moths and rust or stolen by thieves; rather store up a treasure in heaven which no one can steal. Mt. 6:19.

42. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; for God will judge you in the same way as you judge others. Mt. 7:1.

147.43. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but who in their hearts are ravenous wolves; you will recognize them by their fruits. Mt. 7:15.

44. Beware of showing contempt for any of my little ones; their angels see the face of my Father who is in heaven. Mt. 18:10.

45. Be on the watch, for you do not know the day or the hour when the Lord will come. Mt. 25:13.

148.46. Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body; fear rather the one who can kill the body, and then is able to cast the soul into hell. Lk. 12:4,5.

47. Do not worry over what you are to eat or how you are to clothe your body; your heavenly Father is well aware of all your needs. Lk. 12:22,30.

48. All that is hidden will be made known and all that is covered up will be revealed. Lk. 8:17.

149.49. Anyone who aspires to be the greatest among you must become the servant of all, and anyone who wishes to be the first must serve as if he were the last. Mt. 20:26,27.

50. How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven. Mk. 10:23.

51. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Lk. 18:25.

52. And I say to you, love your enemies; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you. Mt. 5:44.

53. Alas for you who are rich; you have your consolation in this world. Lk. 6:24.

150.54. Enter by the narrow gate, for the road that leads to perdition is broad and spacious and many pass along that way. But the gate and the road that lead to eternal life are narrow and only a few find them. Mt. 7:13,14.

55. The last will be first and the first will be last; for many are called but few are chosen. Mt. 20:16.

56. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other, and if anyone takes you to court to claim your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. Mt. 5:39,40.

57. You must always pray and never become discouraged. Lk. 18:1. Keep watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation. Mt. 26:41.

58. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted. Lk. 14:11.

59. Give alms and everything will be clean for you. Lk. 11:41.

60. If your hand or your foot become a cause of sin for you, cut it off and cast it from you. If your eye is a cause of sin for you, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better that you enter heaven with only one hand or foot or one eye than to enter hell with two hands, two feet, and two eyes. Mt. 18:8,9.

151.61. The eight beatitudes

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

2. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

3. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall find consolation.

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be fully satisfied.

5. Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be shown to them.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

8. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Mt. 5:3–10.

152.62. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having hidden these things from the wise and prudent of this world and for revealing them to humble and little ones; yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do. Mt. 11:25.

153. Such is the summary of the great and important truths which eternal Wisdom came on earth to teach us, having first put them into practice himself. His aim was to rid us of the blindness and waywardness caused by our sins.

Blessed are those who understand these eternal truths.

Still more blessed are those who believe them.

Most blessed of all are those who believe them, put them into practice and teach them to others; for they will shine in heaven like stars for all eternity (Dan. 12:13).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SUMMARY OF THE UNBELIEVABLE SORROWS THE INCARNATE WISDOM CHOSE TO ENDURE OUT OF LOVE FOR US

THE MOST CONVINCING REASON FOR LOVING WISDOM

154. Among all the motives impelling us to love Jesus Christ, the Wisdom incarnate, the strongest, in my opinion, is the sufferings he chose to endure to prove his love for us.

“There is,” says St Bernard, “one motive which excels all others which I feel most keenly and which urges me to love Jesus. It is, dear Jesus, the bitter chalice which you drank for our sakes, and the great work of our Redemption which makes you so lovable to us. Indeed this supreme blessing and incomparable proof of your love makes us want to return your love. This motive attracts us more agreeably, makes most just demands upon us, moves us more pressingly and influences us more forcibly.” And he gives the reason in a few words, “Our dear Savior has labored and suffered much to accomplish our redemption. What pain and anguish he has endured!”

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS PASSION

155. But what makes us realize more clearly the infinite love of eternal Wisdom for us is the circumstances surrounding his sufferings.

(a) The first of these is the perfection of his person. Being infinite he gave infinite value to all the sufferings of his passion. Had God sent a seraph or

an angel of the lowest order to become man and die for us, it would have been a stupendous thing and worthy of our eternal gratitude. But that the Creator of heaven and earth, the only Son of God, eternal Wisdom himself should come and offer up his life! This is inconceivable charity, for, compared with his life, the lives of all angels and all men and all creatures together are of infinitely less value than say, the life of a gnat when compared with the lives of the kings of this earth. Such an excess of love is shown to us in this mystery that our admiration and our gratitude should be great indeed.

156. (b) A second circumstance is the condition of the people for whom he suffered. They were human beings—unworthy creatures and his enemies, from whom he has nothing to fear nor anything to hope for. We sometimes hear of people dying for their friends; but are we ever likely to hear of anyone but the Son of God dying for his enemies?

But Jesus Christ proved how well he loved us because though we were sinners—and consequently his enemies—he died for us.

157. (c) The third circumstance is the amount, the grievousness and the duration of his sufferings. Their extent was so great that he is called “Man of sorrows.” “A man of every sorrow in whom there is no soundness from the sole of the foot to the top of the head.” (Is 53.3) This dear friend of our souls suffered in every way exteriorly and inwardly, in body and soul.

158. He suffered even in material things, apart from the poverty of his birth, of his flight into Egypt and his stay there, and the poverty of his entire life; during his passion he was stripped of his garments by soldiers who shared them among themselves, and then fastened him naked to a cross without as much as a rag to cover his body.

159. He suffered in honor and reputation, for he was overwhelmed with insults and called a blasphemer, a revolutionary, a drunkard, a glutton and a possessed person.

He suffered in his wisdom when they classed him as an ignorant man and an imposter, and treated him as a fool and a madman. He suffered in his

power, for his enemies considered him a sorcerer and a magician who worked false miracles through a compact with the devil.

He suffered in his disciples, one of whom bartered him for money and betrayed him; another, their leader, denied him; and the rest abandoned him.

160. He suffered from all kinds of people; from kings, governors, judges, courtiers, soldiers, pontiffs, priests, officials of the temple and lay members; from Jews and gentiles, from men and women; in fact, from everyone. Even his Blessed Mother's presence added painfully to his sufferings for, as he was dying, he saw her standing at the foot of the cross engulfed in a sea of sorrow.

161. Moreover, our dear Savior suffered in every member of his body. His head was pierced with a crown of thorns. His hair and beard were torn out; his cheeks were buffeted; his face covered with spittle; his neck and arms bound with cords; his shoulders weighed down and bruised by the weight of the cross. His hands and feet were pierced by the nails, his side and heart opened by a lance; his whole body lacerated by more than five thousand strokes of the scourge, so that his almost fleshless bones became visible.

All his senses were almost immersed in a sea of sufferings. He suffered in his sight as he beheld the mocking faces of his enemies and the tears of grief of his friends. He suffered in his hearing as he listened to insulting words, false testimonies, calumnious statements and horrible blasphemies which evil tongues vomited against him. He suffered in his sense of smell by the foulness of the filth they spat into his face. He suffered in his sense of taste by a feverish thirst in which he was only given gall and vinegar to drink. He suffered in his sense of touch by the excruciating pain of the lashes, thorns and nails.

162. His most holy soul was grievously tormented because every sin committed by man was an outrage against his Father whom he loved infinitely; because sin was the cause of the damnation of so many souls who would be lost despite his passion and death; and because he had compassion

not only for all men in general but for each one in particular, as he knew them all individually.

All these torments were much increased by the length of time they lasted, that is, from the first instance of his conception to the moment of his death, because all the sufferings he was to endure were, in the timeless view of his wisdom, always distinctly present to his mind.

To all these torments we must add the most cruel and the most fearful one, namely his abandonment upon the cross which caused him to cry out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

THE GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE SUFFERED

163. From all this we must conclude with St. Thomas and the Fathers of the Church that our good Jesus suffered more than all the martyrs both those of past ages and those of the future up to the end of the world. Now if the smallest pain of the Son of God is more precious and more likely to stir our hearts than all the sufferings of angels and men together had they died and given up everything for us, how deep then should be our grief, our love and our gratitude for our Lord who endured for our sakes freely and with the utmost love all that a man could possibly suffer. “For the joy set before him, he endured the cross.” (Heb 12.2) According to the Fathers of the Church, these words mean that Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom, could have remained in his heavenly glory, infinitely distant from our misfortunes. But he chose on our account to come down upon earth, take the nature of man and be crucified. Even when he had become man he could have imparted to his body the same joy, the same immortality, the same blessedness which he now enjoys. But he did not choose this because he wanted to be free to suffer.

164. Rupert adds to this that at the Incarnation, the eternal Father proposed to his Son the saving of the world either by joyful means or by suffering, by acquiring honors or by suffering contempt, by richness or by poverty, by living or by dying. Hence while remaining himself glorious and triumphant, he could have redeemed men and taken them with him along a way paved

with joys, delights, honors and riches had he wished to do so. But he chose rather to endure the cross and sufferings in order to give to God his Father greater glory and to men a proof of greater love.

165. Further, he loved us so much that instead of shortening his sufferings he chose to prolong them and to suffer even more. That is why when he was hanging on the cross, covered with opprobrium and plunged deep in sorrow, as if not suffering enough, he cried out, “I thirst.” For what was he thirsting? St. Laurence Justinian gives us the answer. “His thirst arose from the ardor of his love, from the depth and abundance of his charity. He was thirsting for us, thirsting to give himself to us and suffer for us.”

CONCLUSION

166. Knowing all this are we not right in exclaiming with St. Francis of Paula, “O God who is love, what excesses of love you have shown us in suffering and in dying!” Or with St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, kissing the crucifix, “O Love, how little are you known!” Or St. Francis of Assisi, trudging along the dusty streets, “Jesus, my crucified Love, is not loved.”

Holy Church makes us repeat every day, “The world does not know Jesus Christ,” (Jn 1.10) incarnate Wisdom; and in truth, to know what our Lord has endured for us, and yet like the world not to love him ardently, is morally impossible.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE TRIUMPH OF ETERNAL WISDOM IN AND BY THE CROSS

167. The Cross is according to my belief the greatest secret of the King (Tob 12.7)—the greatest mystery of Eternal Wisdom.

WISDOM AND THE CROSS

How remote and how different are the thoughts and the ways of eternal Wisdom from those of even the wisest of men. (cf Is 55.8) This great God wished to redeem the world, to cast out and chain up the devils, to seal the gates of hell and open heaven to men, and give infinite glory to his eternal Father. Such was his purpose, his arduous task, his great undertaking. What means will be chosen by divine Wisdom, whose knowledge reaches from one end of the universe to the other and orders all things well? (cf Wis 8.1) His arm is almighty; at a stroke he can destroy all that is opposed to him and do whatever he wills. By a single word he can annihilate and create. What more can I say? He has but to will and all is done.

168. But his power is regulated by his love. He wishes to become incarnate in order to convince men of his friendship; he wishes to come down upon earth to help men to go up to heaven. So be it! It would be expected then that this Wisdom incarnate would appear glorious and triumphant, accompanied by millions and millions of angels, or at least by millions of chosen men and women. With these armies, majestic in his splendor and untouched by poverty, dishonor, humiliations and weaknesses, he will crush all his enemies and win the hearts of men by his attractiveness, his delights, his magnificence and his riches.

Surely nothing less than that. But O wonder! He perceives something which is a source of scandal and horror to Jews and an object of foolishness to pagans. (cf 1 Cor 1.23) He sees a piece of vile and contemptible wood which is used to humiliate and torture the most wicked and the most wretched of men, called a gibbet, a gallows, a cross. It is upon this cross that he casts his eyes; he takes his delight in it; he cherishes it more than all that is great and resplendent in heaven and on earth. He decides that that will be the instrument of his conquests, the adornment of his royal state. He will make it the wealth and joy of his empire, the friend and spouse of his heart. O the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How amazing is his choice and how sublime and incomprehensible are his ways! But how inexpressible his love for that cross! (Rom 11.33)

169. Incarnate Wisdom loved the cross from his infancy. (cf Wis 8.2) At his coming into the world, while in his Mother's womb, he received it from his eternal Father. He placed it deep in his heart, there to dominate his life, saying, "My God and my Father, I chose this cross when I was in your bosom. (Ps 39.9) I choose it now in the womb of my Mother. I love it with all my strength and I place it deep in my heart to be my spouse and my mistress." (cf Wis. 8.2)

170. Throughout his life he eagerly sought after the Cross. If, like a thirsting deer, (cf Ps 41.2) he hastened from village to village, from town to town; if with giant strides (cf Ps 18.6) he pursued his way towards Calvary; if he spoke so frequently of his sufferings and death to his apostles and disciples, (cf Mt 16.21; 17.12,22,23; 20.17–19) and even to his prophets during his Transfiguration; (cf Lk 9.31) if he so often exclaimed, "I have longed for it with an infinite desire" (Lk 22.15); it was because all his journeying, all his eagerness, all his pursuits, all his desires were directed towards the Cross and because to die in its embrace was for him the very height of glory and success.

He espoused the Cross at his Incarnation with indescribable love. He sought it out and carried it with the utmost joy, throughout his whole life, which became but one continuous cross. After having made several efforts to embrace it in order to die upon it on Calvary, he asked, "How great is my

distress until it is completed!” How am I hindered? What is delaying me? Why can I not embrace you yet, dear cross of Calvary? (Lk 12.50)

171. At last his wishes were fully satisfied. Bearing a stigma of shame he was attached to the cross, indissolubly joined to it, and died joyfully upon it as if in the arms of a dear friend and upon a couch of honor and triumph.

172. Do not think that, wanting to be more triumphant, he rejected the cross after his death. Far from it; he united himself so closely to it that neither angel nor man, nor any creature in heaven or on earth, could separate him from it. The bond between them is indissoluble, their union is eternal. Never the Cross without Jesus, or Jesus without the Cross.

Through his dying upon it the Cross of ignominy became so glorious, its poverty and starkness so enriching, its sorrows so agreeable, its austerity so attractive, that it became as it were deified and an object to be adored by angels and by men. Jesus now requires that all his subjects adore it as they adore him. It is not his wish that the honor even of a relative adoration be given to any other creature however exalted, such as his most Blessed Mother. This special worship is due and given only to his dear Cross. On the day of the last judgment he will bring to an end all veneration to the relics of the saints, even those most venerable, but not to those of his Cross. He will command the chief Seraphim and Cherubim to collect from every part of the world all the particles of the true Cross. By his loving omnipotence he will re-unite them so well that the whole Cross will be re-formed, the very Cross on which he died. He will have his Cross borne in triumph by angels joyfully singing its praises. It will go before him, borne upon the most brilliant cloud that has ever been seen. And with this Cross and by it, he will judge the world.

Great will be the joy of the friends of the Cross on beholding it. Deep will be the despair of its opponents who, not being able to bear the brilliant and fiery sight of this Cross, will plead for the mountains to fall upon them and for hell to swallow them. (cf Lk 23.30)

THE CROSS AND OURSELVES

173. While waiting for that great day of the last judgment, Eternal Wisdom has decreed the Cross to be the sign, the emblem and the weapon of his faithful people.

He welcomes no child that does not bear its sign. He recognizes no disciple who is ashamed to display it, or who has not the courage to accept it, or who either drags it reluctantly or rejects it outright. He proclaims, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mt 16.24; Lk 9.23)

He enlists no soldier who does not take up the cross as the weapon to defend himself against all his enemies, to attack, to overthrow and to crush them. And he exclaims, “In this sign you will conquer. Have confidence, soldiers of mine, I am your leader; I have conquered my enemies by the cross (Jn 16.33), and by it you also will be victorious.”

174. He has enclosed in the cross such an abundance of grace, life and happiness that only those who enjoy his special favor know about them. He often reveals to his friends his other secrets, as he did to his Apostles: “All things I have made known to you,” (Jn 15.15) but he reveals the secrets of the Cross only to those who make themselves worthy by their great fidelity and great labors. One must be humble, little, self-disciplined, spiritual and despised by the world to learn the mystery of the Cross. The Cross even today is a source of scandal and an object of folly not only to Jews and pagans, Moslems and heretics, the worldly-wise and bad Catholics, but even to seemingly devout and very devout people. Yes, the Cross remains an object of scandal, folly, contempt and fear: not in theory, for never has so much been spoken or written about its beauty and its excellence than in these times; but in practice, because people lose courage, complain, excuse themselves, and run away as soon as a possibility of suffering arises.

“Father,” said this incarnate Wisdom, when beholding in joyful rapture the beauty of the Cross, “I thank you for having hidden these things—the treasures and graces of my cross—from the wise and prudent of this world and revealed them to the little ones.” (Lk 10.21)

175. If the knowledge of the mystery of the Cross is such a special grace, how great must be the enjoyment when one actually possesses it? This is a favor Eternal Wisdom bestows only on his best friends and only after they have prayed for it, longed for it, pleaded for it. However excellent is the gift of faith by which we please God, draw near to him and overcome our enemies, and without which we would be lost, the Cross is an even greater gift.

“It was a greater happiness for St. Peter,” says St. John Chrysostom, “to be imprisoned for Jesus Christ than to be a witness of his glory on Mount Thabor; he was more glorious bound in chains than holding the keys of paradise in his hand.” (Acts 12.3–7; Mt 16.19) St. Paul esteemed it a greater glory to wear a prisoner’s chains for his Savior than to be raised to the third heaven (Eph 3.1; 4.1; 2 Cor 12.2). God bestowed a greater favor on the Apostles and martyrs in giving them his Cross to carry in their humiliations, privations and cruel tortures than in conferring on them the gift of miracles or the grace to convert the world.

All those to whom Eternal Wisdom gave himself have desired the Cross, sought after it, welcomed it. Whatever sufferings came their way, they exclaimed from the depths of their heart with St. Andrew, “O wonderful Cross, so long have I yearned for you!”

176. The Cross is precious for many reasons:

1. Because it makes us resemble Jesus Christ;
2. Because it makes us worthy children of the eternal Father, worthy members of Jesus Christ, worthy temples of the Holy Spirit. “God the Father chastises every son he accepts;” (Heb 12.6) Jesus Christ accepts as his own only those who carry their crosses. The Holy Spirit cuts and polishes all the living stones of the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, the elect (cf 1 Pet 2.5; Apoc 21.2,10). These are revealed truths.
3. The Cross is precious because it enlightens the mind and gives it an understanding which no book in the world can give. “He who has not been tried, what can he know?” (Sir 34.9)

4. Because when it is well carried it is the source, the food and the proof of love. The Cross enkindles the fire of divine love in the heart by detaching it from creatures. It keeps this love alive and intensifies it; as wood is the food of flames, so the Cross is the food of love. And it is the soundest proof that we love God. The Cross was the proof God gave us of his love for us; and it is also the proof which God requires to show our love for him.

5. The Cross is precious because it is an abundant source of every delight and consolation; it brings joy, peace and grace to our souls.

6. The Cross is precious because it brings the one who carries it “a weight of everlasting glory.” (2 Cor 4.17)

177. If we knew the value of the Cross, we would, like St. Peter of Alcantara, have novenas made in order to acquire such a delightful morsel of paradise. We would say, like St. Theresa, “Either to suffer or to die;” or with St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, “Not to die but to suffer.” Like blessed John of the Cross we would ask only for the grace to suffer and be despised. Heaven esteems nothing in this world except the Cross, he said after his death to a saintly person. And our Lord said to one of his servants, “I have crosses of such great value that my Mother, most powerful as she is, can procure from me nothing more precious for her faithful servants.”

178. Wise and honest people living in this world, you do not understand the mysterious language of the Cross. You are too fond of sensual pleasures and you seek your comforts too much. You have too much regard for the things of this world and you are too afraid to be held up to scorn or looked down upon. In short, you are too opposed to the Cross of Jesus. True, you speak well of the Cross in general, but not of the one that comes your way. You shun this as much as you can or else you drag it along reluctantly, grumbling, impatient and protesting. I seem to see in you the oxen that drew the Ark of the Covenant against their will, bellowing as they went, unaware that what they were drawing contained the most precious treasure upon earth. (1 Kgs 6.12)

179. The number of fools and unhappy people is infinite, says Wisdom (Ecc 1.15), because infinite is the number of those who do not know the value of the Cross and carry it reluctantly. But you, true disciples of Eternal Wisdom, if you have trials and afflictions, if you suffer much persecution for justice's sake, if you are treated as the refuse of the world, be comforted, rejoice, be glad, and dance for joy because the cross you carry is a gift so precious as to arouse the envy of the saints in heaven, were they capable of envy. All that is honorable, glorious and virtuous in God and in his Holy Spirit is vested in you, for your reward is great in heaven and even on earth, because of the spiritual favors it obtains for you.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

180. Friends of Jesus Christ, drink of his bitter cup and your friendship with him will increase. Suffer with him and you will be glorified with him. Suffer patiently and your momentary suffering will be changed into an eternity of happiness.

Make no mistake about it; since incarnate Wisdom had to enter heaven by the Cross, you also must enter by the same way. No matter which way you turn, says the Imitation of Christ, you will always find the Cross. Like the elect you may take it up rightly, with patience and cheerfulness out of love for God; or else like the reprobate you may carry it impatiently and unwillingly as those doubly unfortunate ones who are constrained to repeat perpetually in hell, "We have labored and suffered in the world and after it all, here we are with the damned." (Wis 5.7)

True wisdom is not to be found in the things of this world nor in the souls of those who live in comfort. He has fixed his abode in the Cross so firmly that you will not find him anywhere in this world save in the Cross. He has so truly incorporated and united himself with the Cross that in all truth we can say: Wisdom is the Cross, and the Cross is Wisdom.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MEANS TO ACQUIRE DIVINE WISDOM

THE FIRST MEANS

AN ARDENT DESIRE

181. Children of men, how long will your hearts remain heavy and earthbound? How long will you go on loving vain things and seeking what is false? (Ps 4.3) Why do you not turn your eyes and your hearts towards divine Wisdom who is supremely desirable and who, to attract our love, makes known his origin, shows his beauty, displays his riches, and testifies in a thousand ways how eager he is that we should desire him and seek him? “Be desirous, therefore, of hearing my words,” (Wis 6.12) he tells us. “Wisdom anticipates those who want her. (Wis 6.14) The desire of Wisdom leads to the everlasting kingdom.” (Wis 6.21)

182. The desire for divine Wisdom must indeed be a great grace from God because it is the reward for the faithful observance of his commandments. “Son, if you rightly desire wisdom, observe justice and God will give it to you. Reflect on what God requires of you and meditate continually on his commandments and he himself will give you insight, and your desire for wisdom will be granted.” (Sir 1.26; 6.37) “For Wisdom will not enter into a deceitful soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin.” (Wis 1.4)

This desire for Wisdom must be holy and sincere, and fostered by faithful adherence to the commandments of God. There are indeed an infinite number of fools and sluggards moved to be good by countless desires, or rather would-be desires, which, by not bringing them to renounce sin and do violence to themselves, are but spurious and deceitful desires which are

fatal and lead to damnation. (Prov 21.25) The Holy Spirit, who is the teacher of true knowledge, shuns what is deceitful and withdraws himself from thoughts that are without understanding; iniquity banishes him from the soul. (Wis 1.5)

183. Solomon, the model given us by the Holy Spirit in the acquiring of Wisdom, only received this gift after he had desired it, sought after it and prayed for it for a long time. “I desired wisdom and it was given to me. I called upon God and the spirit of wisdom came to me.” (Wis 7.7) “I have loved and sought wisdom from my youth, and in order to have her as my companion and spouse I went about seeking her.” (Wis 8.2,18) Like Solomon and Daniel we must be men of desire if we are to acquire this great treasure which is wisdom. (cf Dan 9.23)

THE SECOND MEANS

CONTINUOUS PRAYER

184. The greater the gift of God, the more effort is required to obtain it. Much prayer and great effort, therefore, will be required to obtain the gift of Wisdom, which is the greatest of all God’s gifts.

Let us listen to the voice of Wisdom himself: “Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you, ask and it shall be given you.” (Mt 7.7; Lk 11.9) It is as if he said: If you wish to find me, you must seek me; if you wish to enter my palace, you must knock at my door; If you wish to receive me, you must ask for me. Nobody finds me unless he searches for me; nobody enters my house unless he knocks at my door; nobody possesses me unless he asks for me. We can only do this by prayer.

Prayer is the usual channel by which God conveys his gifts, especially his Wisdom. The world was asking for the incarnation of divine Wisdom for four thousand years. For fourteen years Mary prepared herself by prayer to receive him in her womb. Solomon received Wisdom only after praying most fervently for a long time: “I went to the Lord and besought him, and I said with all my heart . . . Give me that Wisdom that sits by your throne.” (Wis 8.21; 9.4) “If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask God, and it shall be

given him, for God gives his gifts to all men abundantly and ungrudgingly.” (Jas 1.5) Note here that the Holy Spirit does not say, “If anyone lack charity, humility, patience, etc.,” although these are most excellent virtues, but he says, “If anyone lacks Wisdom.” For by asking for Wisdom we ask for all the virtues possessed by incarnate Wisdom.

185. Therefore to possess Wisdom we must pray. But how should we pray?

First, we should pray for this gift with a strong and lively faith, not wavering, because he who wavers in his faith must not expect to receive any gift from the Lord. (Jas 1.6,7)

186. Secondly, we must pray for it with a pure faith, not counting on consolations, visions or special revelations. Although such things may be good and true, as they have been in some saints, it is always dangerous to rely on them. For the more our faith is dependent on these extraordinary graces and feelings, the less pure and meritorious it is. The Holy Spirit has revealed to us the grandeur and the beauty of Wisdom, and the desire of God to bestow this gift upon us, and our own need of it. Here we find motives strong enough to make us want it and pray God for it with unbounded faith and eagerness.

187. Simple faith is both the cause and the effect of Wisdom in our soul. The more faith we have, the more we shall possess wisdom. The more we possess it, the stronger our faith (cf Rom 1.17) without seeing, without feeling, without tasting and without faltering. “God has said it or promised it;” these words form the basis of all the prayers and actions of every wise man, although from a natural point of view it may seem that God is blind to his plight, deaf to his prayers, powerless to crush his enemies, seemingly empty-handed when help is needed, even though he may be troubled by distractions and doubts, by darkness of the mind, by illusions of the imagination, by weariness and boredom of the heart, by sadness and anguish of soul.

The wise man does not ask to see extraordinary things such as saints have seen, nor to experience sensible sweetness in his prayers. He asks with faith

for divine Wisdom. And he will feel surer that this Wisdom will be given him than if it were vouched for by an angel come down from heaven, because God has said that all who pray in the right manner will receive what they ask for. (Lk 11.10) “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good spirit (of Wisdom) to those who ask him?” (Lk 11.13)

188. Thirdly, we must pray perseveringly to obtain this Wisdom. The acquisition of this precious pearl and infinite treasure requires from us a holy importunity in praying to God, without which we shall not obtain it. We ought not to act as so many do when praying for some grace: after they have prayed for a long time, perhaps for years, and God has not granted their request, they become discouraged and give up praying, thinking that God does not want to listen to them. Thus they deprive themselves of the benefit of their prayers and offend God, who loves to give and who always answers, in some way or another, prayers that are well said.

Whoever then wishes to obtain Wisdom must pray for it day and night without wearying or becoming disheartened. Blessings in abundance will be his if, after ten, twenty, thirty years of prayer, or even an hour before he dies, he comes to possess it. And if he does obtain this treasure after having spent his whole life seeking for it and praying for it and meriting it with much toil and suffering, let him remind himself that it is not a gift due to him in justice, a recompense that he has earned, but rather a charitable alms given to him out of mercy.

189. No, it is not those who are careless and inconstant in their prayers and searchings who obtain Wisdom, but those rather who are like the man in the Gospel who goes during the night to knock at the door of a friend, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread (cf Lk 11.15). Note that it is divine Wisdom himself who in this parable or story teaches us how we should pray if we wish to be heard. This man knocked and repeated his knocking and entreaties four or five times with increased force and insistence, in spite of the untimely hour, near midnight, and his friend having already gone to bed; and in spite of having been rebuffed and told repeatedly to be off and not make himself a selfish nuisance. At length the friend became so annoyed by

the persistence of the man that he got out of bed, opened the door and gave him all he asked for. (cf Lk 11.5–8)

190. That is how we must pray to obtain Wisdom. And assuredly God wants to be importuned, will sooner or later rise up, open the door of his mercy and give us the three loaves of Wisdom, that is, the bread of life, the bread of understanding and the bread of angels. (cf Sir 15.3; Jn 6.35)

Here is a prayer composed by the Holy Spirit to ask for divine Wisdom:

PRAYER OF SOLOMON

191. God of my fathers, God of mercy, you created all things by your word, and by your wisdom you formed man that he might have dominion over all the creatures you have made; that he might govern the world in fairness and justice and pronounce judgment with an upright heart; give me this Wisdom that sits with you on your throne.

Do not exclude me from the number of your children for I am your servant and the son of your handmaid, a man who is weak and short-lived, with little understanding of judgment and laws. For even though a person be considered perfect among the children of men, he is nonetheless worthless if your Wisdom does not dwell in him.

192. It is your Wisdom who has knowledge of your works, who was with you when you made the world, and who knows what is pleasing in your sight and shows what is right according to your commandments.

Send him then from your sanctuary in heaven and from the throne of your majesty, for him to be with me and work with me so that I may know what is pleasing to you; for he possesses the knowledge and understanding of all things. He will lead me in all my works with true perception, and by his power will guard me. My actions then will be pleasing to you and I will lead your people with justice and be worthy of the throne of my father; for what man can know the designs of God, or can discover what is his will?

The thoughts of men are unsure and their plans uncertain, for a perishable body weighs heavily upon their soul, and the earthly dwelling depresses the spirit disturbed by many cares. We understand only with difficulty what is happening upon earth and we find it hard to discern even what is before our eyes. How can we know what is happening in heaven, and how can we know your thoughts unless you give us your Wisdom and send us your Holy Spirit from heaven so that he may straighten out the paths of those living on earth and teach us what is pleasing to you. Lord, it is through your Wisdom that all those who have been pleasing to you since the beginning of time have been saved. (Wis 9.1–6, 9–19)

193. To vocal prayer we must add mental prayer, which enlightens the mind, inflames the heart and disposes the soul to listen to the voice of Wisdom, to savor his delights and possess his treasures.

For myself, I know of no better way of establishing the kingdom of God, Eternal Wisdom, than to unite vocal and mental prayer by saying the holy Rosary and meditating on its fifteen mysteries.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE THIRD MEANS

UNIVERSAL MORTIFICATION

NECESSITY OF MORTIFICATION

194. The Holy Spirit tells us that Wisdom is not found in the hearts of those who live in comfort, (Job 28.13) gratifying their passions and bodily desires, because “they who are of the flesh cannot please God,” and “the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God.” (Rom 8.8,7) “My spirit will not remain in man, because he is flesh.” (Gen 6.3)

All those who belong to Christ, incarnate Wisdom, have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. They always bear about in their bodies the dying of Jesus. They continually do violence to themselves, carry their cross daily. They are dead and indeed buried with Christ. (Gal 5.24; 2 Cor 4.10; Lk 9.23; Rom 6.4,8)

These words of the Holy Spirit show us more clearly than the light of day that, if we are to possess incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, we must practice self-denial and renounce the world and self.

195. Do not imagine that incarnate Wisdom, who is purer than the rays of the sun, will enter a soul and a body soiled by the pleasures of the senses. Do not believe that he will grant his rest and ineffable peace to those who love worldly company and vanities. “To him that overcomes the world and himself, I will give the hidden manna.” (Apoc 2.17)

Although this lovable prince knows and perceives all things in an instant by his own infinite light, he still looks for persona worthy of him. (Wis 6.17)

He has to search because there are so few and he can scarcely find any sufficiently unworldly or sufficiently interior and mortified to be worthy of him, of his treasures, and of union with him.

QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR MORTIFICATION

196. Wisdom is not satisfied with half-hearted mortification or mortification of a few days, but requires one that is total, continuous, courageous and prudent if he is to give himself to us.

If we would possess Wisdom:

197.1. We must either give up actually our worldly possessions as did the apostles, the disciples and the first Christians, and as religious do now—this is the quickest, the best and the surest means to possess Wisdom—or at least we must detach our heart from material things, and possess them as though not possessing them, (cf 1 Cor 7.30) not eager to acquire more or being anxious to retain any of them, and not complaining or worrying when they are lost. This is something very difficult to accomplish.

198.2. We must not follow the showy fashions of the world in our dress, our furniture or our dwellings. Neither must we indulge in sumptuous meals or other worldly habits and ways of living. “Be not conformed to this world.” (Rom 12.2) Putting this into practice is more necessary than is generally thought.

199.3. We must not believe or follow the false maxims of the world or think, speak or act like people of the world. Their doctrine is as opposed to that of incarnate Wisdom as darkness is to light, and death to life. Look closely at their opinions and their words: they think and speak disparagingly of all the great truths of our religion. True, they do not tell brazen lies, but they cover their falsehood with an appearance of truth; they do not think they are being untruthful, but they lie nonetheless. In general, they do not teach sin openly, but they speak of it as if it were virtuous, or blameless, or a matter of indifference and of little consequence. This guile which the devil has taught the world in order to conceal the heinousness of sin and

falsehood is the wickedness spoken of by St. John when he wrote, “The whole world lies in the power of evil” (1 Jn 5.19) and now more than ever before.

200.4. We must flee as much as possible from the company of others, not only from that of worldly people, which is harmful and dangerous, but even from that of religious people when our association with them would be useless and a waste of time. Whoever wishes to become wise and perfect must put into practice these three golden counsels which eternal Wisdom gave to St. Arsenius, “Flee, hide, be silent.” Flee as much as possible the company of men, as the greatest saints have done. Let your life be hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3.3) In short, be silent with others, so as to converse with divine Wisdom. “He who knows how to keep silent is a wise man.” (Sir 20.5)

201.5. If we would possess Wisdom, we must mortify the body, not only by enduring patiently our bodily ailments, the inconveniences of the weather and the difficulties arising from other people’s actions, but also by deliberately undertaking some penances and mortifications, such as fasts, vigils and other austerities practiced by holy penitents.

It requires courage to do that because the body naturally idolizes itself, and the world considers all bodily penances as pointless and rejects them. The world does and says everything possible to deter people from practicing the austerities of the saints. Of every saint, it can be said, with due allowances, “the wise or the saintly man has brought his body into subjection by vigils, fasts and disciplines, by enduring the cold and nakedness and every kind of austerity, and he has made a compact not to give it any rest in this world” (cf Rom. Brev. St. Peter of Alcantara). The Holy Spirit says of all the saints, that they were enemies of the stained robe of the flesh (Jude 23).

202.6. For exterior and voluntary mortification to be profitable, it must be accompanied by the mortifying of the judgment and the will through holy obedience, because without this obedience all mortification is spoiled by self-will and often becomes more pleasing to the devil than to God.

That is why no exceptional mortification should be undertaken without seeking counsel. “I, Wisdom, dwell in counsel.” (Prov 8.12) “He who trusts in himself, trusts in a fool.” (Prov 28.26) “The prudent man does all things with counsel.” (Prov 13.16) And the great counsel given by the Holy Spirit is this: Do nothing without counsel and you shall have nothing to regret afterwards. (Sir 32.24) Seek counsel always of a wise man. (Tob 4.19)

By holy obedience we do away with self-love, which spoils everything; by obedience the smallest of our actions become meritorious. It protects us from illusions of the devil, enables us to overcome our enemies, and brings us surely, as though while sleeping, into the harbor of salvation.

All that I have just said is contained in this one great counsel: “Leave all things and you will find all things by finding Jesus Christ, incarnate Wisdom.” (Imitation of Christ, III, c. 32, No. 1)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FOURTH MEANS

A LOVING AND GENUINE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

203. The greatest means of all, and the most wonderful of all secrets for obtaining and preserving divine Wisdom is a loving and genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

NECESSITY OF GENUINE DEVOTION TO MARY

No one but Mary ever found favor with God (cf Lk 1.30) for herself and for the whole human race. To no other person was given the power to conceive and give birth to Eternal Wisdom. No one else had the power to “incarnate” him, so to speak, in the predestinate by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The patriarchs, prophets and saints of the Old Testament yearned and prayed for the incarnation of Eternal Wisdom, but none of them was able to merit it. Only Mary, by her exalted holiness, could reach the throne of the Godhead and merit this gift of infinite value.

She became the mother, mistress and throne of divine Wisdom.

204. Mary is his most worthy Mother because she conceived him and brought him forth as the fruit of her womb. “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” (Lk 1.42)

Hence it is true to say that Jesus is the fruit and product of Mary wherever he is present, be it in heaven, on earth, in our tabernacles or in our hearts. She alone is the tree of life and Jesus alone is the fruit of that tree.

Therefore anyone who wishes to possess this wonderful fruit in his heart must first possess the tree that produces it; whoever wishes to possess Jesus must possess Mary.

205. Mary is also mistress of divine Wisdom. Not that she is above him who is truly God, or even equal to him. To think or say such a thing would be blasphemous. But because the Son of God, Eternal Wisdom, by making himself entirely subject to her as his Mother, gave her a maternal and natural authority over himself which surpasses our understanding. He not only gave her this power while he lived on earth but still gives it now in heaven, because glory does not destroy nature but makes it perfect. And so in heaven Jesus is as much as ever the Son of Mary, and Mary the Mother of Jesus.

As his Mother, Mary has authority over Jesus, who because he wills it, remains in a sense subject to her. This means that Mary by her powerful prayers and because she is the Mother of God, obtains from Jesus all she wishes. It means that she gives him to whom she decides, and produces him every day in the souls of those she chooses.

206. Happy are those who have won Mary's favors! They can rest assured that they will soon possess divine Wisdom, for as she loves those who love her (cf Prov 8.17), she generously shares her blessings with them, including that infinite treasure which contains every good, Jesus, the fruit of her womb.

207. If it is true to say that Mary is, in a sense, mistress of Wisdom incarnate, what control must she have over all the graces and gifts of God, and what freedom must she enjoy in giving them to whom she chooses.

The Fathers of the Church tell us that Mary is an immense ocean of all the perfections of God, the great storehouse of all his possessions, the inexhaustible treasury of the Lord, as well as the treasurer and dispenser of all his gifts.

Because God gave her his Son, it is his will that we should receive all gifts through her, and that no heavenly gift should come down upon earth

without passing through her as through a channel.

Of her fullness we have all received, and any grace or hope of salvation we may possess is a gift which comes to us from God through Mary. So truly is she mistress of God's possessions that she gives to whom she wills, all the graces of God, all the virtues of Jesus Christ, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, every good thing in the realm of nature, grace and glory. These are the thoughts and expressions of the Fathers of the Church, whose words, for the sake of brevity, I do not quote in the Latin.

But whatever gifts this sovereign and lovable Queen bestows upon us, she is not satisfied until she has given us incarnate Wisdom, Jesus her Son; and she is ever on the look-out for those who are worthy of Wisdom (Wis 6.17), so that she may give him to them.

208. Moreover, Mary is the royal throne of Eternal Wisdom. It is in her that he shows his perfection, displays his treasures, and takes his delight. There is no place in heaven or on earth where Eternal Wisdom shows so much magnificence or finds more delight than in the incomparable Virgin Mary.

That is why the Fathers of the Church call her the tabernacle of the divinity, the place of rest and contentment of the Blessed Trinity, the throne of God, the city of God, the altar of God, the temple of God, the world of God and the paradise of God. All these titles are most correct with regard to the different wonders which the most high God has worked in Mary.

209. Only through Mary, then, can we possess divine Wisdom.

But if we do receive this great gift, where are we to lodge him? What dwelling, what seat, what throne are we to offer this Prince who is so dazzling that the very rays of the sun are dust and darkness in his presence? No doubt we will be told that he has asked only for our heart, that it is our heart we must offer him, and it is there we must lodge him.

210. But we know that our heart is tainted, carnal, full of unruly inclinations and consequently unfit to house such a noble and holy guest. If we had a thousand hearts like our own and offered him the choice of one of them as

his throne, he would rightly reject our offer, turn a deaf ear to our entreaties, and even accuse us of boldness and impertinence in wanting to house him in a place so unclean and so unworthy of his royal dignity.

211. What then can we do to make our hearts worthy of him? Here is the great way, the wonderful secret. Let us, so to speak, bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreservedly to her as servants and slaves. Let us surrender into her hands all we possess, even what we value most highly, keeping nothing for ourselves. This good mistress who never allows herself to be surpassed in generosity will give herself to us in a real but indefinable manner; and it is in her that Eternal Wisdom will come and settle as on a throne of splendor.

212. Mary is like a holy magnet attracting Eternal Wisdom to herself with such power that he cannot resist. This magnet drew him down to earth to save mankind, and continues to draw him every day into every person who possesses it. Once we possess Mary, we shall, through her intercession, easily and in a short time possess divine Wisdom.

Mary is the surest, the easiest, the shortest, and the holiest of all the means of possessing Jesus Christ. Were we to perform the most frightful penances, undertake the most painful journeys, or the most fatiguing labors, were we to shed all our blood in order to acquire divine Wisdom, all our efforts would be useless and inadequate if not supported by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and a devotion to her. But if Mary speaks a word in our favor, if we love her and prove ourselves her faithful servants and imitators, we shall quickly and at little cost possess divine Wisdom.

213. Note that Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus, Head of all the elect, but is also Mother of all his members. Hence she conceives them, bears them in her womb and brings them forth to the glory of heaven through the graces of God which she imparts to them. This is the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, and among them St. Augustine, who says that the elect are in the womb of Mary until she brings them forth into the glory of heaven. Moreover, God has decreed that Mary should dwell in Jacob, make Israel

her inheritance and place her roots in his elect and predestinate (cf Sir 24.13).

214. From these truths we must conclude:

1. that it is futile for us to compliment ourselves on being the children of God and disciples of Wisdom, if we are not children of Mary;
2. that to be numbered among the elect we must have a loving and sincere devotion to our Lady, so that she may dwell in us and plant the roots of her virtues in us;
3. that Mary must beget us in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in us, nurturing us towards the perfection and the fullness of his age (Eph 4.13), so that she may say more truthfully than St. Paul, “My dear children, I am in travail over you afresh until Jesus Christ my Son is perfectly formed in you” (Gal 4.19).

WHAT GENUINE DEVOTION TO MARY CONSISTS IN

215. If I were asked by someone seeking to honor our Lady, “What does genuine devotion to her involve?” I would answer briefly that it consists in a full appreciation of the privileges and dignity of our Lady; in expressing our gratitude for her goodness to us; in zealously promoting devotion to her; in constantly appealing for her help; in being completely dependent on her; and in placing firm reliance and loving confidence in her motherly goodness.

216. We must beware of those false devotions to our Lady which the devil makes use of to deceive and ruin many souls.

I shall not describe them here. I shall only say that genuine devotion to Mary must be sincere, free from hypocrisy and superstition; loving, not lukewarm or scrupulous; constant, not fickle or unfaithful; holy, without being presumptuous or extravagant.

217. We must avoid joining those whose devotion is false and hypocritical, being only on their lips and in their outward behavior.

Neither must we be among those who are critical and scrupulous, who are afraid of going too far in honoring our Lady, as if honor given to our Lady could detract from her Son.

We must not be among those who are lukewarm or self- interested, who have no genuine love for our Lady or filial confidence in her, and who only pray to her to obtain or keep some temporal benefit.

We must not be like those who are inconstant and casual in their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who serve her in fits and starts, honor her for a short time and fall away when temptation comes.

Lastly, we must avoid joining those whose devotion is presumptuous, who under the cloak of some exterior practices of devotion to Mary, conceal a heart corrupted by sin, and who imagine that because of such devotion to Mary they will not die without the sacraments but will be saved, no matter what sins they commit.

218. We must not neglect to become members of our Lady's confraternities, especially the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, fulfilling faithfully the duties prescribed which can only make us holy.

219. But the most perfect and most profitable of all devotions to the Blessed Virgin consists in consecrating ourselves entirely to her, and to Jesus through her, as their slaves. It involves consecrating to her completely and for all eternity our body and soul, our possessions both spiritual and material, the atoning value and the merits of our good actions and our right to dispose of them. In short, it involves the offering of all we have acquired in the past, all we actually possess at the moment, and all we will acquire in the future.

As there are several books treating of this devotion, I will content myself with saying that I have never found a practice of devotion to our Lady more solid than this one, since it takes its inspiration from the example of Jesus

Christ. Neither have I found any devotion which redounds more to God's glory, is more salutary to the soul, and more feared by the enemies of our salvation; nor, finally, have I found a devotion that is more attractive and more satisfying.

220. This devotion, if well practiced, not only draws Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom, into our soul, but also makes it agreeable to him and he remains there to the end of our life. For, I ask you, what would be the good of searching for secrets of finding divine Wisdom and of making every effort to possess this treasure, if after acquiring it, we were, like Solomon, to have the misfortune to lose it by our unfaithfulness? Solomon was wiser than we perhaps shall ever be, and consequently stronger and more enlightened. He went astray, was overcome by temptation, and fell into sin and folly. Thus he left to all those who came after him a double source of wonderment, that he should be so enlightened and still not see; so wise and still be so foolish in his sins. We can say that, if his example and writings have moved so many who came after him to desire and seek Wisdom, the example of his fall—a fact, as far as we can judge—has kept multitudes of souls from effectively going after something which, although priceless, could easily be lost.

221. To be then in some way wiser than Solomon, we should place in Mary's care all that we possess and the treasure of all treasures, Jesus Christ, that she may keep him for us. We are vessels too fragile to contain this precious treasure, this heavenly manna. We are surrounded by too many cunning and experienced enemies to trust in our own prudence and strength. And we have had too many sad experiences of our fickleness and natural thoughtlessness. Let us be distrustful of our own wisdom and fervor.

222. Mary is wise: let us place everything in her hands. She knows how to dispose of us and all that we have for the greater glory of God.

Mary is charitable: she loves us as her children and servants. Let us offer everything to her and we will lose nothing by it; she will turn everything to our gain.

Mary is liberal: she returns more than we give her. Let us give her unreservedly all that we own without any reservation; she will give us a hundredfold in return.

Mary is powerful: nothing on earth can take from her what we have placed in her keeping. Let us then commit ourselves to her care; she will defend us against our enemies and help us to triumph over them.

Mary is faithful: she will not permit anything we give her to be lost or wasted. She stands alone as the Virgin most faithful to God and to men. She faithfully guarded and kept all that God entrusted to her, never allowing the least bit to be lost; and she still keeps watch every day, with a special care, over all those who have placed themselves entirely under her protection and guidance.

Let us, then, confide everything to the faithful Virgin Mary, binding ourselves to her as to a pillar that cannot be moved, as to an anchor that cannot slip, or, better still, as to Mount Sion which cannot be shaken.

Thus whatever may be our natural blindness, our weakness, and our inconstancy, however numerous and wicked our enemies may be, we shall never go wrong or go astray or have the misfortune to lose the grace of God and that infinite treasure which is Eternal Wisdom.

CONSECRATION OF ONESELF TO JESUS CHRIST, WISDOM INCARNATE, THROUGH THE HANDS OF MARY

223. Eternal and incarnate Wisdom, most lovable and adorable Jesus, true God and true man, only Son of the eternal Father and of Mary always Virgin, I adore you profoundly, dwelling in the splendor of your Father from all eternity and in the virginal womb of Mary, your most worthy Mother, at the time of your incarnation.

I thank you for having emptied yourself in assuming the condition of a slave to set me free from the cruel slavery of the evil one.

I praise and glorify you for having willingly chosen to obey Mary, your holy Mother, in all things, so that through her I may be a faithful slave of love.

But I must confess that I have not kept the vows and promises which I made to you so solemnly at my baptism. I have not fulfilled my obligations, and I do not deserve to be called your child or even your loving slave.

Since I cannot lay claim to anything except what merits your rejection and displeasure, I dare no longer approach the holiness of your majesty on my own. That is why I turn to the intercession and the mercy of your holy Mother, whom you yourself have given me to mediate with you. Through her I hope to obtain from you contrition and pardon for my sins, and that Wisdom whom I desire to dwell in me always.

224. I turn to you, then, Mary immaculate, living tabernacle of God, in whom eternal Wisdom willed to receive the adoration of both men and angels.

I greet you as Queen of heaven and earth, for all that is under God has been made subject to your sovereignty.

I call upon you, the unfailing refuge of sinners, confident in your mercy that has never forsaken anyone.

Grant my desire for divine Wisdom and, in support of my petition, accept the promises and the offering of myself which I now make, conscious of my unworthiness.

225. I, an unfaithful sinner, renew and ratify today through you my baptismal promises. I renounce for ever Satan, his empty promises, and his evil designs, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life, and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now.

This day, with the whole court of heaven as witness, I choose you, Mary, as my Mother and Queen. I surrender and consecrate myself to you, body and soul, with all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the spiritual value of all my actions, past, present, and to come. I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without any reservations, in whatever way you please, for the greater glory of God in time and throughout eternity.

226. Accept, gracious Virgin, this little offering of my slavery to honor and imitate the obedience which eternal Wisdom willingly chose to have towards you, his Mother. I wish to acknowledge the authority which both of you have over this little worm and pitiful sinner. By it I wish also to thank God for the privileges bestowed on you by the Blessed Trinity. I solemnly declare that for the future I will try to honor and obey you in all things as your true slave of love.

O admirable Mother, present me to your dear Son as his slave now and for always, so that he who redeemed me through you, will now receive me through you.

227. Mother of mercy, grant me the favor of obtaining the true Wisdom of God, and so make me one of those whom you love, teach and guide, whom you nourish and protect as your children and slaves.

Virgin most faithful, make me in everything so committed a disciple, imitator, and slave of Jesus, your Son, incarnate Wisdom, that I may become, through your intercession and example, fully mature with the fullness which Jesus possessed on earth, and with the fullness of his glory in heaven. Amen.

Let those accept it who can (Mt 19.12).

Let the wise consider these things (Hos 14.9; cf Jer 9.12; Ps 106.43).

A LETTER TO
THE FRIENDS
OF THE CROSS

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

Copyright © 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing.
All rights reserved.

Copyright © 1950 by Montfort Publications, Bay Shore, L.I., N.Y. US.
Retypeset and republished in 2013 by Catholic Way Publishing. Cover design by Catholic Way
Publishing.

Imprimi Potest:
S. Laurentii ad Separim die 3a Maii , 1950.
A. JOSSELIN, S.M.M.,
Superior General.

Nihil Obstat:
MARTINUSJ. HEALY, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:
± THOMAS EDMUNDUS MOLLOY, S.T.D.,
Episcopus Brooklynensis.
Brooklynii, XX mensis Octobri s 1950.

Originally published in French by Saint Louis de Montfort as “Lettre aux Amis de la Croix.”

This work is published for the greater Glory of Jesus Christ through His most Holy Mother Mary and
for the sanctification of the militant Church and her members.

The typography of this book is the property of Catholic Way Publishing and may not be reproduced,
in whole or in part, without written permission of the Publisher.

Catholic Way Publishing® and the associated logo are registered Trademarks of the Catholic Way
Publishing Company.

Available in Paperback.

CONTENTS

INDEX

A LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

PART I

EXCELLENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

I

GRANDEUR OF THE NAME, FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

PART II

THE TWO GROUPS

I

THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST AND THE FOLLOWERS OF THE WORLD

II

THE OPPOSING SPIRIT OF THE GROUPS

III

LOVING APPEAL OF JESUS

PART III

PRACTICES OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, THE DIVINE MASTER'S PROGRAM

I

THE DESIRE TO BECOME A SAINT?

II

SELF-DENIAL

III

SUFFERING

IV
IN CHRIST-LIKE FASHION

PART IV
FOURTEEN RULES TO FOLLOW IN CARRYING ONE'S CROSS

PREFACE

St. Louis Mary De Montfort (1673–1716), author of this “Letter,” is widely known through his treatise on “The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” and its abridgment “The Secret of Mary.” Well has he merited the title of “Apostle of Mary” and deservedly he is called “Tutor of the Legion of Mary.” Addressing the many pilgrims at the canonization of St. De Montfort, July 1947, the Holy Father calls him “the guide who leads you to Mary and from Mary to Jesus.” Speaking of St. Louis’ “Prayer for Missionaries,” Father Faber says:

“Since the Apostolical Epistles, it would be hard to find words that burn so marvelously.” He has founded two religious congregations: the priests and the brothers of the Company of Mary (Montfort Fathers) and the Daughters of Wisdom. To his sons and daughters he has left a rich heritage of doctrinal writings.

In this “Letter” St. Louis manifests his passionate love for the Cross and pours forth the noble sentiments of his ardent soul. Like St. Paul, he is “determined to know nothing. . . . except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2–2); “indeed a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those who are called. . . the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1–23, 24).

While giving missions in the city of Nantes in 1708, this eloquent preacher of the Cross and devout slave of Jesus in Mary formed, from the most fervent souls among his audiences, an association of “The Friends of the Cross.” This fraternity or association was established in the localities evangelized by the holy Missionary to fight against the many disorders and vices of the times and to make reparation for the outrages perpetrated against the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Each time he visited these places he

exhorted the members to persevere in their first fervor. Alas! Suddenly he was forbidden to preach to them. Through intrigues, machinations and calumny his arch enemies, the Jansenists, prevailed to have their redoubtable adversary silenced.

During the summer of 1714 Father De Montfort stopped at Rennes. Here, too, with diabolical hate and fury, the Jansenists succeeded in having the saintly Missionary silenced. Welcoming this added humiliation—for his heaviest cross was to be without a cross—he took refuge at his alma mater, the Jesuit College at Rennes, where he was warmly received. Here he buried himself in an eight day retreat meditating on the mystery of Calvary. From an incessant heart-to-heart talk with the Man of Sorrows and His Blessed Mother he received a new light and a more ardent love for the Crucified Savior.

On the last day of the retreat St. Louis, always eager to lead the faithful souls on the Royal Road of the Cross, desired to communicate to his fervent followers the fruits of his sublime meditation and poured forth the burning sentiments of his apostolic soul in the following “Letter.”

In this epistle he gives us a holy doctrine which he preached and lived all his life thus imitating his Divine Master, Jesus Christ. It is believed that as a seminarian he wrote those two wonderful poems: “The Strength of Patience” (39 stanzas) and the “Triumph of the Cross” (31 stanzas) in which we find the elements contained in this “Letter.” As a young priest he wrote his first book, “Love of Eternal Wisdom,” and in its beautiful fourteenth chapter, “The Triumph of Eternal Wisdom in the Cross and by the Cross,” is demonstrated the author’s great love for the Folly of the Cross. In his allocution on St. De Montfort, quoted above, the Holy Father said: “Being crucified himself he has a perfect right to speak with authority on Christ Crucified. . . . He gives a sketch of his own life when drawing up a plan of life in his ‘Letter to the Friends of the Cross’ (Cf. “Letter,” No. 4, 2).

When this “Letter” appeared St. Louis had already written the “Secret of Mary” and most probably had finished its lucid development “True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” to which this “Letter” is very closely

related and is, as it were, the development and completion of the saintly author's "plan of forming a true client of Mary and a true disciple of Jesus Christ" (True Devotion No. 111).

Although written more than two centuries ago to fight against the evils and vices of those days this "Letter" retains all its usefulness and freshness. It wages a holy war on *the* evils, vices, pagan materialism and secularism of the present day. St. Louis gives us a panacea for all these ills: Christian mortification, prayer and a total consecration of ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In a strong staccato tone he tells us "to suffer, to weep, to fast, to pray, to hide ourselves, to humiliate ourselves, to impoverish ourselves, to mortify ourselves. He who has not the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of the Cross, does not belong to Him, but they who belong to Him have crucified their flesh and their concupiscence."

Is this not the message Our Lady of Fatima gave to the world—penance, mortification, sacrifice, prayer and consecration to her Immaculate Heart—in 1917. Is it not Our Blessed Mother who guided and inspired her faithful Apostle to write it!

Thus imbued with a burning love for Christ Crucified, a love born of humiliation, suffering, persecution and contempt, like his Divine Master, St. Louis gives us, at the close of his "Letter," some wise, prudent rules that teach us how to suffer and bear our crosses patiently, willingly and joyfully in the footsteps of Our Lord and Crucified Savior. Thus convinced of the necessity of the Cross, stimulated by the happy effects it produces in our souls, and guided by the same rules laid down by St. Louis De Montfort we will more readily renounce Satan, the world and the filth; we will more patiently bear our trials, crosses and tribulations and we will more carefully heed Christ's admonition: "If any one wishes to come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke: 8–23).

The Editor

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends of the Cross:

1. Since the divine Cross keeps me hidden and prevents me from speaking, I cannot, and do not even wish to express to you by word of mouth the feelings of my heart on the divine *excellence* and *practices* of your Association in the adorable Cross of Jesus Christ.

However, on this last day of my retreat, I come out, as it were, from the sweet retirement of my interior, to trace upon paper a few little arrows from the Cross with which to pierce your noble hearts. God grant that I could point them with the blood of my veins and not with the ink of my pen. Even if blood were required, mine, alas!, would be unworthy. May the spirit of the living God, then, be the life, vigor and tenor of this letter. May His unction be my ink, His divine Cross my pen and your hearts my paper.

PART I

EXCELLENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

I

GRANDEUR OF THE NAME, FRIENDS OF THE CROSS

2. Friends of the Cross, you are a group of crusaders united to fight against the world, not like those religious, men and women, who leave the world for fear of being overcome, but like brave, intrepid warriors on the battlefield, refusing to retreat or even to yield an inch. Be brave. Fight with all your might.

Bind yourselves together in that strong union of heart and mind which is far superior, far more terrifying to the world and hell! than the armed forces of a well-organized kingdom are to its enemies. Demons are united for your destruction, but you, be united for their overthrow; the avaricious are united to barter and hoard up gold and silver, combine your efforts in the pursuit of the eternal treasures hidden in the Cross; reprobates unite to make merry, but you, be united to suffer.

3. You call yourselves “Friends of the Cross.” What a wonderful name! I must admit that it charms and fascinates me. It is brighter than the sun, higher than the heavens, more imposing and resplendent than any title given to king or emperor. It is the great name of Christ Himself, true God and true Man at one and the same time. It is the unmistakable title of a Christian.

4. Its splendor dazzles me but the weight of it frightens me. For this title implies that you have taken upon yourselves difficult and inescapable

obligations, which are summed up in the words of the Holy Ghost: “A chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people” (1 Peter 2, 9).

A Friend of the Cross is one chosen by God from among ten thousand who have reason and sense for their only guide. He is truly divine, raised above reason and thoroughly opposed to the things of sense, for he lives in the light of true faith and burns with love for the Cross.

A Friend of the Cross is a mighty king, a hero who triumphs over the devil, the world and the flesh and their threefold concupiscence. He overthrows the pride of Satan by his love for humiliation, he triumphs over the world’s greed by his love for poverty and he restrains the sensuality of the flesh by his love for suffering.

A Friend of the Cross is a holy man, separated from visible things. His heart is lifted high above all that is frail and perishable; “his conversation is in heaven” (Phil. 3, 20); he journeys here below like a stranger and pilgrim. He keeps his heart free from the world, looks upon it with an unconcerned glance of his left eye and disdainfully tramples it under foot.

A Friend of the Cross is a trophy which the crucified Christ won on Calvary, in union with His Blessed Mother. He is another Benoni (Gen. 35, 18) or Benjamin, a son of sorrow, a son of the right hand. Conceived in the sorrowful heart of Christ, he comes into this world through the gash in the Savior’s right side and is all empurpled in His blood. True to this heritage, he breathes forth only crosses and blood, death to the world, the flesh and sin and hides himself here below with Jesus Christ in God (Col. 3, 3).

Thus, a perfect Friend of the Cross is a true Christ-bearer, or rather another Christ, so much so that he can say with truth: “I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2, 20).

5. My dear Friends of the Cross, does every act of yours justify what the eminent name you bear implies? Or at least are you, with the grace of God, in the shadow of Calvary’s Cross and of Our Lady of Pity, really eager and truly striving to attain this goal? Is the way you follow the one that leads to

this goal? Is it the true way of life, the narrow way, the thorn-strewn way to Calvary? Or are you unconsciously traveling the world's broad road, the road to perdition? Do you realize that there is a highroad which to all appearances is straight and safe for man to travel, but which in reality leads to death?

6. Do you really know the voice of God and grace from the voice of the world and human nature? Do you distinctly hear the voice of God, our kind Father, pronouncing His three-fold curse upon everyone who follows the world in its concupiscence: "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth" (Apoc. 8, 13) and then appealing to you with outstretched arms: "Be separated, My chosen people (Is. 48,20; 52,11; Jer. 50,8; 51,6), beloved Friends of the Cross of My Son, be separated from those worldlings, for they are accursed by My Majesty, repudiated by My Son (John 17,9) and condemned by My Holy Spirit (John 16,8–12). Do not sit in their chair of pestilence; take no part in their gatherings; do not even step along their highways (Ps. 1,1). Hurry away from this great and infamous Babylon (Is. 48,20; Jer. 51,6); hearken only to the voice of My Beloved Son; follow only in His footprints; for He is the One I have given to be your Way, Truth, Life (John 14,6) and Model: hear ye Him" (Matt. 17,5; Luke 9,35; Mark 9,6; 2 Pet. 1,17).

Is your ear attentive to the pleadings of the lovable and cross-burdened Jesus, "Come, follow Me; he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness (John 8,12); have confidence, I have conquered the world" (John 16, 33)?

PART II

THE TWO GROUPS

I

THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST AND THE FOLLOWERS OF THE WORLD

7. Dear Brethren, these are the two groups that appear before you each day, the followers of Christ and the followers of the world.

Our loving Savior's group is to the right, scaling a narrow path made all the narrower by the world's corruption. Our kind Master is *in* the lead, barefooted, thorn-crowned, robed in His blood and weighted with a heavy cross. There is only a handful of people who follow Him, but they are the bravest of the brave. His gentle voice is not heard above the tumult of the world, or men do not have the courage to follow Him in poverty, suffering, humiliation and in the other crosses His servants must bear all the days of their life.

II

THE OPPOSING SPIRIT OF THE GROUPS

8. To the left is the world's group, the devil's in fact, which is far superior in number, and seemingly far more colorful and splendid in array. Fashionable folk are all in a hurry to enlist, the highways are overcrowded, although they are broad and ever broadening with the crowds that flow through in a torrent. These roads are strewn with flowers, bordered with all kinds of amusements and attractions, and paved with gold and silver (Matt. 7,13–14).

9. To the right, the little flock that follows Jesus can speak only of tears, penance, prayer and contempt for worldly things. Sobbing in their grief, they can be heard repeating: "Let us suffer, let us weep, let us fast, let us pray, let us hide, let us humble ourselves, let us be poor, let us mortify ourselves, for he who has not the spirit of Christ, the spirit of the Cross, is none of Christ's. Those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its concupiscence. We must be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ or else be damned!" "Be brave," they keep saying to each other, "be brave, for if God is for us, in us and leading us, who dare be against us? The One Who is dwelling within us is stronger than the one who is in the world; no servant is above his master; one moment of light tribulation worketh an eternal weight of glory; there are fewer elect than man may think; only the brave and daring take heaven by storm; the crown is given only to those who strive lawfully according to the Gospel, not according to the fashion of the world. Let us put all our strength into the fight, and run very fast to reach the goal and win the crown." Friends of the Cross spur each other on with such divine words.

10. Worldlings, on the contrary, rouse one another to persist in their unscrupulous depravity. "Enjoy life, peace and pleasure," they shout, "Enjoy life, peace and pleasure. Let us eat, let us drink, let us sing, let us dance, let us play. God is good, He did not make us to damn us; God does not forbid us to enjoy ourselves; we shall not be damned for that; away with scruples; we shall not die." And so they continue.

III

LOVING APPEAL OF JESUS

11. Dear Brethren, remember that our beloved Jesus has His eyes upon you at this moment, addressing you individually: "See how almost everybody leaves Me practically alone on the royal road of the Cross. Blind idol-worshippers sneer at My Cross and brand it folly. Obstinate Jews are scandalized at the sight of it as at some monstrosity (1 Cor. 1,23). Heretics tear it down and break it to pieces out of sheer contempt. But one thing I cannot say without My eyes filling with tears and My heart being pierced

with grief is that the very children I nourished in My bosom and trained in My school, the very members I quickened with My spirit have turned against Me, forsaken Me and joined the ranks of the enemies of My Cross (Is. 1,2; Phil. 3,18). Would you also leave Me? (John 6,68). Would you also forsake me and flee from My Cross, like the worldlings, who are acting as so many Anti -Christs? (1 John 2,12). Would you subscribe to the standards of the day (Rom. 12,2), despise the poverty of My Cross and go in quest of riches; shun the sufferings connected with My Cross, to run after pleasure; spurn the humiliations that must be borne with My Cross, and pursue worldly honors? There are many who pretend that they are friends of Mine and love M e but in reality they hate M e because they have no love for My Cross. I have many friends of My table, but few indeed of My Cross.” (Imitation of Jesus Christ, Book 2, Chap. 11.)

12. In answer to the gracious invitation which Jesus extends, let us rise above ourselves. Let us not, like Eve, listen to the insidious suggestion of sense. Let us look up to the unique Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus crucified (Heb. 12,2). Let us fly from the corrupting concupiscence and enticements of a corrupt world (2 Pet. 1,4). Let us love Jesus in the right way, standing by Him through the heaviest of crosses. Let us meditate seriously on these remarkable words of our beloved Master which sum up the Christian life in its perfection: “If any man will come after Ma let him deny hi mself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16,24).

PART III

PRACTICES OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, THE DIVINE MASTER'S PROGRAM

13. Christian perfection consists:

1. in willing to become a saint: "If any man will come after Me";
2. in self-denial . "Let him deny himself";
3. in suffering: "Let him take up his cross";
4. in doing: "Let him follow Me."

14. If *anyone*, not *many a one*, shows that the elect who are willing to be made conformable to the crucified Christ by carrying their cross are few in number. It would cause us to faint away from grief to learn how surprisingly small is their number.

It is so small that among ten thousand people there is scarcely one to be found, as was revealed to several Saints, among whom St. Simon Stylita, referred to by the holy Abbot Ni I us, followed by St. Basil, St. Ephrem and others. So small, indeed, that if God willed to gather them together, He would have to cry out as he did of yore through the voice of a prophet: "Come ye together one by one" (Is. 27,12), one from this province and one from that kingdom.

[St. De Montfort here speaks of that small group of saintly souls who carry their cross more perfectly. He does not, however, exclude from salvation

that vast multitude of less perfect Christians which the mercy of God wills to save.]

I

THE DESIRE TO BECOME A SAINT?

15. If anyone *wills*: if a person has a real and definite determination and is prompted not by natural feelings, habit, self-love, personal interest or human respect but by an all-masterful grace of the Holy Ghost which is not communicated indiscriminately: “it is not given to all men to understand this mystery” (Matt. 13,11). In fact, only a privileged number of men receive this practical knowledge of the mystery of the Cross. For that man who climbs up to Calvary and lets himself be nailed on the Cross with Jesus in the heart of his own country must be a brave man, a hero, a resolute man, one who is lifted up in God, who treats as muck both the world and hell, as well as his very body and his own will. He must be resolved to relinquish all things, to undertake anything and to suffer everything for Jesus.

Understand this, dear Friends of the Cross, should there be anyone among you who has not this firm resolve, he is just limping along on one foot, flying with one wing, and undeserving of your company, since he is not worthy to be called a Friend of the Cross, for we must love the Cross as Jesus Christ loved it “with a great heart and a willing mind” (2 Mach. 1,3). That kind of half-hearted will is enough to spoil the whole flock, like a sheep with the scurvy. If any such one has slipped into your fold through the contaminated door of the world, then in the name of the crucified Christ, drive him out as you would a wolf from your sheepfold.

16. “If anyone will come *after Me*”: for I have humbled Myself and reduced Myself to mere nothingness in such a way that I made Myself a worm rather than a man: “I am a worm and no man” (Ps. 21,7). *After Me*: for if I came into the world, it was only to espouse the Cross: “Behold I am come” (Ps. 39,8; Heb. 10,7–9); to set the cross in My heart of hearts: “In the midst of my heart” (Ps. 39,9); to love it from the days of my youth: “I have loved it from my youth” (Wisdom 8,2); only to long for it all the days of my life: “how straitened I am” (Luke 12,50); only to bear it with a joy I

preferred even to the joys and delights that heaven and earth could offer: “Who, having joy set before him, endured the cross” (Heb. 12,2); and, finally, not to be satisfied until I had expired in its divine embrace.

II

SELF-DENIAL

17. Therefore, if anyone wants to come after Me, annihilated and crucified, he must glory as I did only in the poverty, humiliation and suffering of My Cross: “let him deny himself” (Matt. 16,24).

Far be from the Company of the Friends of the Cross those who pride themselves in suffering, the worldly-wise, elated geniuses and self-conceited individuals who are stubborn and puffed-up with their lights and talents Far be they from us, those endless talkers who make plenty of noise but bring forth no other fruit than vainglory.

Far from us those high-browed devotees everywhere displaying the self-sufficient pride of Lucifer: “I am not like the rest!” (Luke 18,11). Far be from us those who must always justify themselves when blamed, resist when attacked and exalt themselves when humbled.

Be careful not to admit into your fellowship those frail, sensitive persons who are afraid of the slightest pin-prick, who sob and sigh when faced with the lightest suffering, who have never experienced a hair-shirt, a discipline or any other penitential instrument, and who, with their fashionable devotions, mingle the most artful delicacy and the most refined lack of mortification.

III

SUFFERING

18. *Let him take up his cross*, the one that is *his*. Let this man or this woman, rarely to be found and worth more than the entire world (Prov. 31,10–31), take up with joy, fervently clasp in his arms and bravely set upon his shoulders this cross that is his own and not that of another; his own

cross, the one that My Wisdom designed for him in every detail of number, weight and measurement; his own cross whose four dimensions, its length, breadth, thickness and height (Eph. 3,18), I very accurately gauged with My own hands; his own cross which all out of love for him I carved from a section of the very Cross I bore on Calvary; his cross, the grandest of all the gifts I have for My chosen ones on earth; his cross, made up in its thickness of temporal loss, humiliation, disdain, sorrow, illness and spiritual trial which My Providence will not fail to supply him with every day of his life; his cross, made up in its length of a definite period of days or months when he will have to bear with slander or be helplessly stretched out on a bed of pain, or forced to beg, or else a prey to temptation, dryness, desolation and many another mental anguish; his cross, made up in its breadth of hard and bitter situations stirred up for him by his relatives, friends or servants; his cross, finally, made up in its depth of secret sufferings which I will have him endure nor will I allow him any comfort from created beings, for by My order they will turn from him too and even join Mein making him suffer.

19. Let him *carry* it, and not drag it, not shoulder it off, not lighten it, nor hide it. Let him hold it high in hand, without impatience or peevishness, without voluntary complaint or grumbling, without dividing or softening, without shame or human respect.

Let him place it on his forehead and say with St. Paul: “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6,14).

Let him carry it on his shoulders, after the example of Jesus Christ, and make it his weapon to victory and the scepter of his empire (Is 9,16).

Let him root it in his heart and there change it into a fiery bush, burning day and night with the pure love of God, without being consumed.

20. *The cross*: it is the *cross* he must carry for there is nothing more necessary, more useful, more agreeable and more glorious than suffering for Jesus Christ.

21. All of you are sinners and there is not a single one who is not deserving of hell; I myself deserve it the most. These sins of ours must be punished either here or hereafter. If they are punished in this world, they will not be punished in the world to come.

If we agree to God's punishing here below, this punishment will be dictated by love. For mercy, which holds sway in this world, will mete out the punishment, and not strict justice. This punishment will be light and momentary, blended with merit and sweetness and followed up with reward both in time and eternity.

22. But if the punishment due to our sins is held over for the next world, then God's avenging justice, which means fire and blood, will see to the punishing. What horrible punishment! How incomprehensible, how unspeakable! "Who knoweth the power of thy anger?" (Ps. 89,11). Punishment devoid of mercy (James 2,13), pity, mitigation or merit; without limit and without end. Yes, without end! That mortal sin of a moment that you committed, that deliberate evil thought which now escapes your memory, the word that is gone with the wind, that act of such short duration against God's law—they shall all be punished for an eternity, punished with the devils of hell, as long as God is God! The God of vengeance will have no pity on your torments or your sobs and tears, violent enough to cleave the rocks. Suffering and still more suffering, without merit, without mercy and without end!

23. Do we think of this, my dear Brothers and Sisters, when we have some trial to undergo here below? Blessed indeed are we who have the privilege of exchanging an eternal and fruitless penalty for a temporary and meritorious suffering, just by patiently carrying our cross. What debts we still have to pay! How many sins we have committed which, despite a sincere confession and heartfelt contrition, will have to be atoned for in Purgatory for many a century, simply because in this world we were satisfied with a few insignificant penances! Let us settle our debts with good grace here below in cheerfully bearing our crosses, for in the world to come everything must be expiated, even the idle word (Matt. 12,36) and even to the last farthing. If we could lay hands on the devil's death-register

in which he has noted down all our sins and the penalty to be paid, what a heavy debit we would find and how joyfully we would suffer many years hereon earth rather than a single day in the world to come.

24. Do you not flatter yourselves, Friends of the Cross, that you are, or that you want to be, the friends of God? Be firmly resolved then to drink of the chalice which you must necessarily drink if you wish to enjoy the friendship of God. “They drank the chalice of the Lord and became the friends of God” (Common of Apostles, Lesson 7). The beloved Benjamin had the chalice while his brothers had only the wheat (Gen. 44,1–4). The disciple whom Jesus preferred had his Master’s heart, went up with Him to Calvary and drank of the chalice. “Can you drink my chalice?” (Matt 20,22). To desire God’s glory is good, indeed, but to desire it and pray for it without being resolved to suffer all things is mere folly and senseless asking. “You know not what you ask (Matt. 20,2 2) . . . you must undergo much suffering” (Acts 14,21): you must, it is necessary, it is indispensable!

We can enter the kingdom of heaven only at the price of many crosses and tribulations.

25. You take pride in being God’s children and you do well; but you should also rejoice in the lashes your good Father has given you and in those He still means to give you; for He scourges every one of His children (Prov. 3,11; Heb. 13,5–6; Apoc. 3,19). If you are not of the household of His beloved sons, then—how unfortunate! what a calamity!—you are, as St. Augustine says, listed with the reprobate. Augustine also says: “The one that does not mourn like a stranger and wayfarer in this world cannot rejoice in the world to come as a citizen of heaven” (Sermon 31, 5 and 6). If God the Father does not send you worth-while crosses from time to time, that is because He no longer cares for you and is angry at you. He considers you a stranger, an outsider undeserving of His hospitality, or an unlawful child who has no right to share in his father’s estate and no title to his father’s supervision *and* discipline.

26. Friends of the Cross, disciples of a crucified God, the mystery of the Cross is a mystery unknown to the Gentiles, repudiated by the Jews and

spurned by both heretics and bad Catholics, yet it is the great mystery which you must learn to practice at the school of Jesus Christ and which you can learn only at His School. You would look in vain for any philosopher who taught it in the Academies of ancient times; you would ask in vain either the senses or reason to throw any light on it, for Jesus alone, through His triumphant grace, is able to teach you this mystery and make you relish it.

Become proficient, therefore, in this super-eminent branch of learning under such a skillful Master. Having this knowledge, you will be possessed of all other branches of learning, for it surpassingly comprises them all. The Cross is our natural as well as our supernatural philosophy. It is our divine and mysterious theology. It is our philosopher-stone which, by dint of patience, is able to transmute the grossest of metals into precious ones, the sharpest pain into delight, poverty into wealth and the deepest humiliation into glory. He amongst you who knows how to carry his cross, though he know not A from B, towers above all others in learning.

Listen to the great St. Paul, after his return from the third heaven, where he was initiated into mysteries which even the Angels had not learned. He proclaims that he knows nothing and wants to know nothing but Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2,2). You can rejoice, then, if you happen to be a poor man without any schooling or a poor woman deprived of intellectual attainments, for if you know how to suffer with joy you are far more learned than a doctor of the Sorbonne who is unable to suffer as you do.

27. You are members of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6,15; 12,27; Eph. 5,30). What an honor! But, also, what need for suffering this entails! When the Head is crowned with thorns should the members be wearing a laurel of roses? When the Head is jeered at and covered with mud from Calvary's road should its members be enthroned and sprayed with perfume? When the Head has no pillow on which to rest, should its members be reclining on soft feathers? What an unheard of monster such a one would be! No, no, dear companions of the Cross, make no mistake. The Christians you see around you, fashionably attired, super-sensitive, excessively haughty and sedate, are neither true disciples nor true members of the crucified Jesus. To

think otherwise would be an insult to your thorn-crowned Head and His Gospel truth.

My God! How many would-be Christians there are who imagine they are members of the Savior when in reality they are His most insidious persecutors, for while blessing themselves with the sign of the Cross, they crucify Him in their hearts

If you are led by the spirit of Jesus and are living the same life with Him, your thorn-crowned Head, then you must look forward to nothing but thorns, nails and lashes, in a word, to nothing but across.

A real disciple needs to be treated as his Master was, a member as its Head. And if the Head should offer you, as He offered St. Catherine of Siena, the choice between a crown of thorns and a crown of roses, do as she did and grasp the crown of thorns, fastening it tightly to your brow in the likeness of Jesus.

28. You are aware of the fact that you are living temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6,19) and that, like living stones (1 Pa 2,5), you are to be placed by the God of love in the heavenly Jerusalem He is building. You must expect then to be shaped, cut and chiseled under the hammer of the Cross, otherwise you would remain unpolished stone, of no value at all, to be disregarded and cast aside. Do not cause the hammer to recoil when it strikes you. Yield to the chisel that is carving you and the hand that is shaping you. It may be that this skillful and loving Architect wants to make you a cornerstone in His eternal edifice, one of His most faithful portraits in the heavenly kingdom. So let Him see to it. He loves you, He really loves you; He knows what He is doing, He has experience. Love is behind every one of His telling strokes; nor will a single stroke miscarry unless your impatience deflects it.

29. At times the Holy Spirit compares the cross to a winnowing that clears the good grain from the chaff and dust (Matt. 3,13; Luke 3,17). Like grain in the winnowing, then, let yourself be shaken up and tossed about without resistance, for the Father of the household is winnowing you and will soon

have you in His harvest. He also likens the cross to a fire whose intense heat burns rust off iron. God is a devouring fire (Deut. 4,24; 9,3; Heb. 13,29) dwelling in our souls through His Cross, purifying them yet not consuming them, exemplified in the past in a burning bush (Ex. 3,2–3). He likens it at times to the crucible of a forge where gold is refined (Prov. 17,3; Eccli. 2,5) and dross vanishes in smoke, but, in the processing, the precious metal must be tried by fire while the baser constituents go up in smoke and flame. So, too, in the crucible of tribulation and temptation, true Friends of the Cross are purified by their constancy in suffering while the enemies of the Cross vanish in smoke by their impatience and murmurings.

30. Behold, dear Friends of the Cross, before you a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12,1–2) who silently testify that what I assert is the truth. For instance, consider Abel, a righteous man, who was slain by his own brother; then Abraham, a righteous man, who journeyed on the earth like a wanderer; Lot, a righteous man, who was driven from his own country; Jacob, a righteous man, who was persecuted by his own brother; Tobias, a righteous man, who was stricken with blindness; Job, a righteous man, who was pauperized, humiliated and covered with sores from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet.

31. Consider the countless Apostles and Martyrs who were bathed in their own blood; the countless Virgins and Confessors who were pauperized, humiliated, exiled and cast aside. Like St. Paul they fervently proclaim: Behold our beloved Jesus, “Author and Finisher of the faith” (Heb. 12,2) we put in Him and in His Cross; it was necessary for Him to suffer and so to enter through the Cross into His glory (Luke 24,26).

There at the side of Jesus consider Mary, who had never known either original or actual sin, yet whose tender, Immaculate Heart was pierced with a sharp sword even to its very depths. If I had time to dwell on the Passion of Jesus and Mary, I could prove that our sufferings are naught compared to theirs.

32. Who, then, would dare claim exemption from the cross? Who would refuse to rush to the very place where he knows he will find a cross

awaiting him? Who would refuse to borrow the words of the martyr, St. Ignatius: “Let fire and gallows, wild beasts and all the torments of the devil assail me, so that I may rejoice in the possession of Jesus Christ.”

33. If you have not the patience to suffer and the generosity to bear your cross like the chosen ones of God, then you will have to trudge under its weight, grumbling and fretting like reprobates; like the two animals that dragged the Ark of the Covenant, lowing as they went (1 Kings 6,12); like Simon the Cyrenaeon who unwillingly put his hand to the very Cross of Christ (Matt. 27,32; Mark 15,21), complaining while he carried it. You will be like the impenitent thief who from the summit of his cross plunged headlong into the depths of the abyss.

No, the cursed earth on which we live cannot give us happiness. We can see none too clearly in this benighted land. We are never perfectly calm on this troubled sea. . We are never without warfare in a world of temptation and battlefields We cannot escape scratches on a thorn-covered earth. Both elect and reprobate must bear their cross here, either willingly or unwillingly. Remember these words:

“Three crosses stand on Calvary’s height

One must be chosen, so choose aright;

Like a saint you must suffer, or a penitent thief,

Or like a reprobate, in endless grief.”

This means that if you will not suffer gladly as Jesus did, or patiently like the penitent thief, then you must suffer despite yourself like the impenitent thief. You will have to drain the bitterest chalice even to the dregs, and with no hope of relief through grace.

You will have to bear the entire weight of your cross, and without the powerful help of Jesus Christ. Then, too, you will have that awful weight to bear which the devil will add to your cross, by means of the impatience the

cross will cause you. After sharing the impenitent thief's unhappiness here on earth, you will meet him again in the fires of hell.

34. But if you suffer as you should, your cross will be a sweet yoke (Matt. 11,30), for Christ will share it with you. Your soul will be borne on it as on a pair of wings to the portals of Heaven. It will be the mast on your ship guiding you happily and easily to the harbor of salvation.

Carry your cross with patience: a cross patiently borne will be your light in spiritual darkness, for he knows naught who knows not how to suffer (Eccli. 34,9).

Carry your cross with joy and you will be inflamed with divine love, for only in suffering can we dwell in the pure love of Christ.

Roses are only gathered from among thorns. As wood is fuel for the fire, so too is the Cross the only fuel for God's love. Remember that saying we read in the "Following of Christ": "Inasmuch as you do violence to yourself," suffering patiently, "insofar do you advance" in divine love (Bk. 1, Chap. 15,11). Do not expect anything great from those fastidious, slothful souls who refuse the Cross when it approaches and who do not go in search of any, when discretion allows. What are they but untilled soil, which can produce only thorns because it has not been turned up, harrowed and furrowed by a judicious laborer. They are like stagnant water which is unfit for either washing or drinking.

Carry your cross joyfully and none of your enemies will be able to resist its conquering strength (Luke 21,15), while you yourself will enjoy its relish beyond compare. Yes, indeed, Brethren, remember that the real Paradise here on earth is to be found in suffering for Jesus, Ask the saints. They will tell you that they never tasted a banquet so delicious to the soul than when undergoing the severest torments. St. Ignatius the Martyr said: "Let all the torments of the devil come upon me!" "Either suffering or death!" said St. Theresa, and St. Magdalen de Pazzi: "Not death but suffering!" "May I suffer and be despised for Thy sake," said Blessed John of the Cross. In

reading the lives of the saints we find many others speaking in the self-same terms.

Dear Brethren, believe the Word of God, for the Holy Spirit says: The Cross affords all kinds of joy to anyone without exception who suffers cheerfully for God, (Jas. 1,2). The joy that springs from the cross is keener than the joy which a poor person would experience if over-laden with an abundance of riches, than the joy of a peasant who is made ruler of his country, than the joy of a commander-in-chief over the victories he has won, than the joy of a prisoner released from his fetters. In conclusion, let us picture the greatest joys to be found here below: the joy of a crucified person who knows how to suffer not only equals them but even surpasses them all.

35. Be glad, therefore, and rejoice when God favors you with one of His choicest crosses, for without realizing it you are being blessed with the greatest gift that Heaven has, the greatest gift of God. Yes, the cross is God's greatest gift. If you could only understand this, you would have Masses said, you would make novenas at the tombs of the saints; you would undertake long pilgrimages, as did the saints, to obtain this divine gift from Heaven.

36. The world claims it is madness on your part, degrading and stupid, rash and reckless. Let the world, in its blindness, say what it likes. This blindness which is responsible for a merely human and distorted view of the cross is a source of glory for us. For every time they provide us with crosses by mocking and persecuting us, they are simply offering us jewels, setting us upon a throne and crowning us with laurels

37. What I say is but little. Take all the wealth and honors and scepters and brilliant diadems of monarchs and princes, says St. John Chrysostom, they are all insignificant compared with the glory of the Cross; it is greater even than the glory of the Apostles and the Sacred Writers. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, this saintly man goes as far as to say: "If I were given the preference, I would gladly leave Heaven to suffer for the God of Heaven. I would prefer the darkness of a dungeon to the thrones of the highest heaven and the heaviest of crosses to the glory of the Seraphim.

Suffering for me is of greater value than the gift of miracles, the power to command the infernal spirits, to master the physical universe, to stop the sun in its course and to raise the dead to life. Per and Paul are more glorious in the shackles of a dungeon than in being lifted to the third heaven and presented with the keys to Paradise.”

38. In fact, was it not the Cross that gave Jesus Christ “a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2,9–10). The glory of the one who knows how to suffer is so great that the radiance of his splendor rejoices heaven, angels and men and even the God of Heaven. If the saints in Heaven could still wish for something they would want to return to earth so as to have the privilege of bearing a cross.

39. If the cross is covered with such glory on earth, how magnificent it must be in Heaven. Who could ever understand and tell the eternal weight of glory we are given when, even for a single instant, we bear a cross as a cross should be borne (2 Cor. 4,17). Who could ever collate the glory that will be given in Heaven for the crosses and sufferings we carried for a year, perhaps even for a lifetime.

40. Evidently, my dear Friends of the Cross, heaven is preparing something grand for you, as you are told by a great Saint, since the Holy Ghost has united you so intimately to an object which the whole world so carefully avoids. Evidently, God wishes to make of you as many saints as you are Friends of the Cross, if you are faithful to your calling and dutifully carry your cross as Jesus Christ has carried His.

IV

IN CHRIST-LIKE FASHION

41. But mere suffering is not enough. For even the devil and the world have their martyrs. We must suffer and bear our crosses in the footsteps of Jesus. *Let him follow Me*: this means that we must bear our crosses as Jesus bore His. To help you do this, I suggest the following rules:

PART IV

FOURTEEN RULES TO FOLLOW IN CARRYING ONE'S CROSS

42. First. Do not, deliberately and through your own fault, procure crosses for yourself. You must not do evil in order to bring about good. You should never try to bring discredit upon yourself by doing things improperly, unless you have a special inspiration from on high. Strive rather to imitate Jesus Christ, who did all things well (Mark 7,37), not out of self-love or vainglory, but to please God and to win over His fellow-men. Even though you do the best you can in the performance of your duty, you will still have to contend with contradiction, persecution and contempt which Divine Providence will send you against your will and without your choice.

43. Second. Should your neighbor be scandalized, although without reason, at any action of yours which in itself is neither good nor bad, then, for the sake of charity, refrain from it, to avoid the scandal of the weak. This heroic act of charity will be of much greater worth than the thing you were doing or intended to do.

If, however, you are doing some beneficial or necessary thing for others and were unreasonably disapproved by a hypocrite or prejudiced person, then refer the matter to a prudent adviser, letting him judge of its expedience and necessity. Should his decision be favorable, you have only to continue and let these others talk, provided they take no means to prevent you. Under such circumstances, you have Our Lord's answer to His disciples when they informed Him that Scribes and Pharisees were scandalized at His words and deeds: "Let them alone; they are blind." (Matt. 15,14).

44. Third. Certain holy and distinguished persons have been asking for and seeking, or even, by eccentricities, bringing upon themselves, crosses, disdain and humiliation. Let us simply adore and admire the extraordinary workings of the Holy Spirit in these souls. Let us humble ourselves in the presence of this sublime virtue, without making any attempt to reach such heights, for compared with these racing eagles and roaring lions we are simply fledglings and cubs

45. Fourth. You can nevertheless and even should ask for the wisdom of the Cross, that sapid, experimental knowledge of the truth, which, in the light of faith, shows us the deepest mysteries, among others the mystery of the Cross. But this can be had only by dint of hard toil, profound humiliation and fervent prayer. If you need that perfect spirit (Ps. 50,14) which enables us to bear the heaviest crosses with courage—that sweet, kindly spirit (Luke 11,13) which enables us to relish in the higher part of the soul things that are bitter and repulsive—that wholesome, upright spirit (Ps 50,12) which seeks God and God alone—that all-embracing knowledge of the Cross—briefly that infinite treasure which gives the soul that knows how to make good use of it a share in the friendship of God (Wisdom 7,14), ask for this wisdom, ask for it constantly, fervently, without hesitation or fear of not obtaining it. You will certainly obtain it and then see clearly, in the light of your own experience, how it is possible to desire, seek and relish the Cross.

46. Fifth. If, inadvertently, you blunder into a cross, or even if you do so through your own fault, forthwith humble yourselves interiorly under the mighty hand of God (1 P. 5,6), but do not worry over it. You might say to yourself: “Lord, there is another trick of my trade.” If the mistake you made was sinful, accept the humiliation you suffer as punishment. But if it was not sinful, then humbly accept it in expiation of your pride. Often, actually very often, God allows His greatest servants, those who are far advanced in grace, to make the most humiliating mistakes. This humbles them in their own eyes and in the eyes of their fellow men. It prevents them from seeing and taking pride in the graces God bestows on them or in the good deeds they do, so that, as the Holy Ghost declares: “no flesh should glory in the sight of God” (1 Cor. 1,29).

47. Sixth. Be fully persuaded that through the sin of Adam and through our own actual sins everything within ourselves is vitiated, not only the senses of the body but even the powers of the soul. So much so that as soon as the mind, thus vitiated, takes delight in poring over some gift received from God, then the gift itself, or the act or the grace is tarnished and vitiated and God no longer favors it with His divine regard. Since looks and thoughts of the human mind can spoil man's best actions and God's choicest gifts, what about the acts which proceed from man's own will and which are more corrupt than the acts of the mind?

So we need not wonder, when God hides His own within the shadow of His countenance (Ps. 30,21), that they may not be defiled by the regards of their fellow men or by their own self-consciousness. What does not this jealous God allow and do to keep them hidden! How often He humiliates them! Into how many faults He permits them to fall! How often He allows them to be tempted as St. Paul was tempted (2 Cor. 12,7)! In what a state of uncertainty, perplexity and darkness He leaves them! How wonderful God is in His saints, and in the means He takes to lead them to humility and holiness!

48. Seventh. Be careful not to imitate proud self-centred zealots. Do not think that your crosses are tremendous, that they are tests of your fidelity to God and tokens of God's extraordinary love for you. This gesture has its source in spiritual pride. It is a snare quite subtle and beguiling but full of venom. You ought to acknowledge, first, that you are so proud and sensitive that you magnify straws into rafters, scratches into deep wounds, rats into elephants, a meaningless word, a mere nothing, in truth, into an outrageous, treasonable insult. Second, you should acknowledge that the crosses God sends you are really and truly loving punishments for your sins, and not special marks of God's benevolence. Third, you must admit that He is infinitely lenient when He sends you some cross or humiliation, in comparison with the number and atrocity of your sins. For these sins should be considered in the light of the holiness of a God Whom you have offended and Who can tolerate nothing that is defiled; in the light of a God dying and weighted down with sorrow at the sight of your sins; in the light of an everlasting hell which you have deserved a thousand times, perhaps a

hundred thousand times. Fourth, you should admit that the patience you put into suffering is more tinged *than* you think with natural human motives. You have only to note your little self-indulgences, your skillful seeking for sympathy, these confidences you so naturally make to friends or perhaps to your spiritual director, your quick, clever excuses, the murmurings or rather the detractions so neatly worded, so charitably spoken against those who have injured you, the exquisite delight you take in dwelling on your misfortunes and that belief so characteristic of Lucifer, that you are somebody (Acts 8,9), and so forth. Why I should never finish if I were to point out all the ways and by-ways human nature takes, even in its sufferings.

49. Eighth. Take advantage of your sufferings and more so of the small ones than of the great. God considers not so much what we suffer as how we suffer. To suffer much, yet badly, is to suffer like reprobates. To suffer much, even bravely, but for a wicked cause, is to suffer as a martyr of the devil. To suffer much or little for the sake of God is to suffer like saints.

If it be right to say that we can choose our crosses, this is particularly true of the little and obscure ones as compared with the huge, conspicuous ones, for proud human nature would likely ask and seek for the huge, conspicuous crosses even to the point of preferring them and embracing them. But to choose small, unnoticeable crosses and to carry them cheerfully requires the power of a special grace and unshakeable fidelity to God. Do then as the storekeeper does with his merchandise: make a profit on every article; suffer not the loss of the tiniest fragment of the true Cross. It may be only the sting of a fly or the point of a pin that annoys you, it may be the little eccentricities of a neighbor, some unintentional slight, the insignificant loss of a penny, some little restlessness of soul, a slight physical weakness, a light pain in your limbs. Make a profit on every article as the grocer does, and you will soon become wealthy in God, as the grocer does in money, by adding penny to penny in his till. When you meet with the least contradiction, simply say: "Blessed be God! My God I thank you." Then treasure up in the till of God's memory the cross which has just given you a profit. Think no more of it, except to say: "Many thanks!" or, "Be merciful!"

50. Ninth. The love you are told to have for the Cross is not sensible love, for this would be impossible to human nature.

It is important to note the three kinds of love: sensible love, rational love and love that is faithful 'and supreme; in other words, the love that springs from the lower part of man, the flesh; the love that springs from the superior or part, his reason; and the love that springs from the supreme part of man, from the summit of his soul, which is the intellect enlightened by faith.

51. God does not ask you to love the Cross with the will of the flesh. Since the flesh is the subject of evil and corruption, all that proceeds from it is evil and it cannot, of itself, submit to the will of God and His crucifying law. It was this aspect of His human nature which Our Lord referred to when He cried out, in the Garden of Olives: "Father, . . . not My will but Thine be done." (Luke 22,42). If the lower powers of Our Lord's human nature, though holy, could not love the Cross without interruption, then, with still greater reason, will our human nature, which is very much vitiated, repel it. At times, like many of the saints, we too may experience a feeling of even sensible joy in our sufferings, but that joy does not come from the flesh though it is in the flesh. It flows from our superior powers, so completely filled with the divine joy of the Holy Ghost, that it spreads to our lower powers. Thus a person who is undergoing the most unbearable torture is able to say: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. 83,3).

52. There is another love for the Cross which I call rational, since it springs from the higher part of man, his reason. This love is wholly spiritual. Since it arises from the knowledge of the happiness there is in suffering for God, it can be and really is perceived by the soul. It also gives the soul inward strength and joy. Though this rational and perceptible joy is beneficial, even very beneficial, it is not an indispensable part of joyous, divine suffering.

53. This is why there is another love, which the masters of the spiritual life call the love of the summit and highest point of the soul and which the philosophers call the love of the intellect. When we possess this love, even though we experience no sensible joy or rational pleasure, we love and

relish, in the light of pure faith, the cross we must bear, even though the lower part of our nature may often be in a state of warfare and alarm and may moan and groan, weep and sigh for relief; and thus we repeat with Jesus Christ: “Father . . . not My will but Thine be done” (Luke 22,42), or with the Blessed Virgin: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word” (Luke 1,38).

It is with one of these two higher loves that we should accept and love our cross.

54. Tenth. Be resolved then, dear Friends of the Cross, to suffer every kind of cross without excepting or choosing any: all poverty, all injustice, all temporal loss, all illness, all humiliation, all contradiction, all calumny, all spiritual dryness, all desolation, all interior and exterior trials. Keep saying: “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready” (Ps. 56,8). Be ready to be forsaken by men and angels and, seemingly, by God Himself. Be ready to be persecuted; envied, betrayed, calumniated, discredited and forsaken by everyone. Be ready to undergo hunger, thirst, poverty, nakedness, exile, imprisonment, the gallows and all kinds of torture, even though you are innocent of everything with which you may be charged. What if you were cast out of your own home like Job and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary; thrown, like this saint, into the mire; or dragged upon a manure pile like Job, malodorous and covered with ulcers, without anyone to bandage your wounds, without a morsel of bread, never refused to a horse or a dog? Add to these dreadful misfortunes all the temptations with which God allows the devil to prey upon you, without pouring into your soul the least feeding of consolation.

Firmly believe that this is the summit of divine glory and real happiness for a true, perfect Friend of the Cross.

55. Eleven. For proper suffering, form the pious habit of considering four things:

First, the Eye of God. God is like a great king, who from the height of a tower observes with satisfaction his soldier in the midst of the battle and

praises his valor. What is it on earth that attracts God's attention? Kings and emperors on their thrones? He often looks at them with nothing but contempt. Brilliant victories of a nation's armies, precious stones, any such things that are great in the sight of men? "What is great to men is an abomination before God" (Luke 16,15). What then does God look upon with pleasure and delight? What is He asking the Angels about, and even the devils? It is about the man who is fighting for Him against riches, against the world, hell and himself, the man who is cheerfully carrying his cross. Hast thou not seen upon earth that great wonder which the heavens consider with admiration? said the Lord to Satan; "hast thou considered My servant Job" (Job 2,3) who is suffering for Me?

56. Second, the Hand of God, Every disorder in nature, from the greatest to the smallest, is the work of His almighty Hand. The Hand that devastates an army of a hundred thousand (2 Kings 19,35) will make a leaf drop from a tree and a hair fall from your head (Luke 2 1,18). The Hand that was laid so heavily upon Job is particularly light when it touches you with some little trial. This Hand fashions day and night, sun and darkness, good and evil. God permits the sin which provokes you; He is not the cause of its malice, although He does allow the act.

If anyone, then, treats you as Semei treated King David (2 Kings 16,5–11), loading you with insults and casting stones at you, say to yourself: "I must not mind; I must not take revenge for this is an ordinance of God. I know that I have deserved every abuse and it is only right that God punish me. Desist, my hands, and strike not; desist, my tongue, and speak not; the person who injures me by word or deed is an ambassador, mercifully sent by God to punish me as His love alone knows how. Let us not incur His justice by assuming His right to vengeance. Let us not despise His mercy by resisting the affectionate strokes of His lash, lest, for His vengeance, He should remand us to the rigorous justice of eternity."

Consider how God bears you up with one Hand, of infinite power and wisdom, while with the other He chastises you. With the one He deals out death, while with the other He dispenses life. He humbles you and raises you up. With both arms, He reaches sweetly and mightily (Wisdom 8,1)

from the beginning of your life to its end. Sweetly: by not allowing you to be tempted or afflicted beyond your strength. Mightily: by favoring you with a powerful grace, proportioned to the vehemence and duration of your temptation or affliction. Mightily:—and the spirit of His holy Church bears witness—“He is your stay on the brink of a precipice, your guide along a misleading road, your shade in the scorching heat, your raiment in the pouring rain or the biting cold. He is your conveyance when you are utterly exhausted, your help in adversity, your staff on the slippery way. He is your port of refuge when, in the throes of a tempest, you are threatened with ruin and shipwreck.”

57. Third, consider the Wounds and Sorrows of our crucified Jesus. Hear what He Himself has to say: “All ye that pass along the thorny and crucifying way I had to follow, look and see. Look with the eyes of your body; look with the eye of contemplation, and see if your poverty, nakedness, disgrace, sorrow, desolation are like unto Mine. Behold Me innocent as I am, then will you complain, you who are guilty” (Lam. 1,12).

The Holy Ghost told us, by the mouth of the Apostles, that we should keep our eyes on Jesus Crucified (Gal. 3,1) and arm ourselves with this thought of Him (1 Pet. 4,1) which is our most powerful and most penetrating weapon against all our enemies. When you are assailed by poverty, disrepute, sorrow, temptation or any other cross, arm yourselves with this shield, this breastplate, this helmet, this two-edged sword (Eph. 6,12–18), that is, with the thought of Jesus crucified. There is the solution to your every problem, the means you have to vanquish all your enemies.

58. Fourth, lift up your eyes, behold the beautiful crown that awaits you in Heaven if you carry your cross as you should. That was the reward which kept patriarchs and prophets strong in faith under persecution. It gave heart to the Apostles and martyrs in their labors and torments. Patriarchs used to say as Moses had said: “We would rather be afflicted with the people of God,” so as to enjoy eternal happiness with Him, “than to have the pleasure of sin for a short time (Heb. 11,25–26). The prophets repeated David’s words: “We suffer great persecutions on account of the reward” (Ps. 63,8; 118,112). The Apostles and martyrs voiced the sentiments of St. Paul: “We

are, as it were, men appointed to death: we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men,” by our sufferings “being made the offscouring of the world,” (1 Cor. 4,9–13), “by reason of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which this momentary *and* light tribulation worketh in us” (2 Cor. 4,17).

Let us see and listen to the angels right above us: “Be careful not to forfeit the crown that is set aside for you if you bravely bear the cross that is given you. If you do not bear it well, someone will bear it in your stead and will take your crown. All the saints warn us: fight courageously, suffer patiently and you will be given an everlasting kingdom.” Let us hear Jesus: “To him only will I give My reward who shall suffer and overcome through patience” (Apoc. 2,6; 11,17; 3,5; 21,7).

Let us lower our eyes and see the place we deserve, the place that awaits us in hell in the company of the wicked thief and the reprobate, if we go through suffering as they did, resentful and bent on revenge. Let us exclaim after St. Augustine; “Burn. O Lord, cut, carve, divide in this world, in punishment for my sins, provided Thou pardon them in eternity.”

59. Twelfth. Never murmur or deliberately complain about any created thing that God may use to afflict you. It is important to note the three kinds of complaints that may arise when misfortune assails you. The first is natural and involuntary. This happens when the human body moans and groans, sobs and sighs and weeps. If, as I said, the higher point of the soul submits to the will of God, there is no sin. The second is rational. Such is the case when we complain and disclose our hardship to some superior or physician who is able to remedy it. This complaint may be an imperfection, if too eagerly made, but it is no sin. The third is sinful. This happens when a person complains of others either to rid himself of the suffering they cause him, or to take revenge. Or else when he wilfully complains about the sorrow he must bear and shows signs of grief and impatience.

60. Thirteenth. Whenever you are given a cross, be sure to embrace it with humility and gratitude. If God, in His infinite goodness, favors you with a cross of some importance, be sure to thank him in a special way and have

others join you in thanking him. Do as that poor woman did who, through an unjust lawsuit, lost everything she owned. She immediately offered the last few pennies she had, to have a Mass said in thanksgiving to Almighty God for the good fortune that had come to her.

61. Fourteenth. If you wish to be worthy of the Nisi crosses, those that are not of your choice, then, with the help of a prudent director, take on some that are voluntary.

Suppose you have a piece of furniture that you do not need but prize. Give it to some poor person, and say to yourself: “Why should I have things I do not need, when Jesus is destitute?”

Do you dislike certain kinds of food, the practice of some particular virtue, or some offensive odor? Taste this food, practice this virtue, endure this odor, conquer yourself.

Is your affection for some person or thing too ardent and tender? Keep away, deprive yourself, break away from things that appeal to you.

Have you that natural tendency to see and be seen, to be doing things or going someplace? Mind your eyes and hold your tongue, stop right where you are and keep to yourself.

Do you feel a natural aversion to some person or thing? Rise above self by keeping near them.

62. If you are truly Friends of the Cross, then, without your knowing it, love, which is always ingenious, will discover thousands of little crosses to enrich you. Then you need not fear self-conceit which often accompanies the patient endurance of conspicuous crosses and since you have been faithful in a few things, the Lord will keep His promise and set you over many things (Matt. 25,21,23): over many graces He will grant you; over many crosses He will send you; over much glory He will prepare for you.

APOSTLE OF MARY SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

P. M. FENNESSY

CONTENTS

INDEX

APOSTLE OF MARY SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

CONTENTS

APOSTLE OF MARY SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

CONTROVERSIAL DOCTRINE

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS

FOUR MEANS

ANOTHER OBJECTION

POVERTY, SICKNESS

RECOVERY

“THE TREE OF LIFE”

HOME MISSIONS

THREAT OF JANSENISM

“FRIENDS OF THE CROSS”

ARRIVAL AT. POITIERS

HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

OPPOSITION

PEACE FOLLOWS

PERSECUTION FOLLOWS

THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM

[A HOME MISSIONARY](#)

[MODERN MEANS](#)

[OTHER PARISHES FOLLOW](#)

[PILGRIMAGE TO ROME](#)

[THROUGH MARY](#)

[ROME AT LAST](#)

[MISSION IN FRANCE](#)

[RETURN TO FRANCE](#)

[OUR LADY OF PITY](#)

[PROPHETIC VISION](#)

[PROPHECY FULFILLED](#)

[RETURNS TO HIS DIOCESE](#)

[DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART](#)

[APOSTLE OF MARY](#)

[TRUE DEVOTION](#)

[DIOCESE OF NANTES](#)

[OPPOSITION BY JANSENISTS](#)

[THE DIOCESE OF LA ROCHELLE](#)

[PASTORAL WORK CONTINUES](#)

[THE DE MONTFORT FATHERS](#)

[THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM AGAIN.](#)

[A LASTING IMPRESSION](#)

[HIS DEATH APPROACHES](#)

[HIS FINAL MESSAGE](#)

[HE RECEIVES THE LAST SACRAMENTS](#)

[HE DIES, HIS WORK LIVES ON](#)

[THE LEGION OF MARY](#)

[PAPAL COMMENDATION](#)

[THE CHURCH TODAY](#)

[MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH](#)

APOSTLE OF MARY

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, a young man named LOUIS MARIE GRIGNON DE LA BACHELERAIE decided to surrender all things for Christ—even his name. So for his family name he substituted MONTFORT, the place of his birth, and he has become famous since his canonization in 1947 as St. Louis Marie de Montfort.

CONTROVERSIAL DOCTRINE

A “sign of contradiction” in his own time, even as the Crucified Master he served, he remains today a centre of controversy both among Christians and non-Christians. And this storm of opposition lashes continually, not so much at his own person, as against his spiritual doctrine of the “True Devotion.” The violence of the tempest has, in fact, completely obscured the valuable witness of his own life, so that even his friends see only a confused outline of the saint they acclaim as “Tutor of the Legion of Mary,” “Apostle of Mary,” and “Missionary of the Blessed Virgin.”

This short biography is an attempt to give at least a glimpse of the remarkable man who was Founder, Missionary, Doctor and Theologian, and the spiritual father of a multitude of Marian disciples. Some acquaintance with the saint and his time is an indispensable preliminary for an understanding of the full significance of his teaching. Perhaps, by way of introduction, the principal objections to de Montfort’s spirituality should be faced at the outset.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS

His book on the “True Devotion” does not almost deify Mary, so that the role of Christ—His position as Mediator—is obscured. The basic ideas of his Marian teaching were centuries old when he combined them into his masterly synthesis. And in the introduction to his Treatise he writes:

“Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of all things. We labour not, as the Apostle, says, except to render every man perfect in Jesus Christ. If then we establish the solid devotion to Our Lady, it is only to establish more perfectly the devotion to Jesus Christ, and to put forward an easy and secure means for finding Jesus Christ.”

The “True Devotion” is familiar enough from innumerable booklets and pamphlets on the subject. However, perhaps it is not fully realized that it represents only a part of de Montfort’s doctrinal structure on “Love of the Eternal Wisdom.” “True Devotion,” though certainly his most important, is not his most comprehensive work. “Love of the Eternal Wisdom” is the key to his spirituality, of which “True Devotion” formed the fourth part.

His principal theme is his teaching on Christ-Wisdom, which is a development of St. Paul’s doctrine of the humility of the Incarnate Word. De Montfort follows here the guidance of Berulle, and his opinions are typical of the French School of spirituality of the 17th century. Berulle drew from the teaching of St. Paul the practical conclusion that Christians should imitate the servitude of the human nature of Christ by offering themselves totally to the Word, and remaining completely dependent on Him. It is significant that de Montfort has made this idea the corner-stone of his own spirituality and, in his book on “Eternal Wisdom,” he develops it in a way which shows the broad sweep of his thought. Great importance is also given to the Passion of Christ and the need for renunciation, the purpose of which is clear from the concluding words:

“Wisdom is the Cross and the Cross is wisdom.”

FOUR MEANS

But the book is wide in its scope, and proposes four principal means that must be employed to possess and love Christ. *A perfect devotion to Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Wisdom, is the fourth means* which makes it

possible for Christians to offer themselves totally to the Incarnate Word and remain completely dependent on Him. The other means are

1. desire,
2. prayer, and
3. mortification.

It was de Montfort's compassion for our weakness in using these means of holiness, and in responding generously to God's grace, that urged him to take the fourth part of his Treatise and enlarge it into a special study now known as "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin."

While "True Devotion" is undoubtedly de Montfort's most important and inspiring contribution to religious literature, it is not, as is often supposed, a complete expression of his teaching. To regard it as complete in itself is to condemn de Montfort's spirituality as unbalanced, and to mis-understand both his life and his work. His principal theme is always Christ-Wisdom, and it is on this foundation that he has erected his system of spirituality. Devotion to Our Lady is not an end in itself, but a means, although a most perfect means, of possessing Jesus Christ.

ANOTHER OBJECTION

Another objection is that de Montfort's approach is no longer in tune with the temperament of modern Christians, or the spirituality of our time—particularly since the work of the Second Vatican Council in giving a new emphasis to Mary, not as Mediatrix, but as Mother of the Church. Yet Mgr. Mattenci, in a broadcast from Vatican Radio in October, 1963, pointed out that the desire of the Council was simply to express Mary's maternal function in the Mystical Body and to encourage devotion to her as "the type of the Church." For in the life of the Church, Mary fulfils an ecumenical, maternal role as Mother of unity, Mother of reconciliation, Patroness of the Council.

It will always be true, in spite of the shift of emphasis in the new theology, and in spite of difficulties caused by the poverty of language itself, that Mary has a vital part to play in the apostolic work of the Church, and in the

life and devotion of every Christian. We would not now use de Montfort's descriptions of Mary's privileges; but Mary is no less our Mother. What, after all, could be more glorious or more meaningful, than the very first of Mary's titles, "Mother of God," bestowed on her at the great Council of Ephesus in a.d. 431?

And, despite his difficult style and intense spirituality, de Montfort himself is the most modern of saints—almost flamboyant in the zeal of his missionary experiments. One could easily imagine him as an 18th century Bishop Sheen or Father Peyton, making full use of the spectacular and the unconventional, if only it would lead men to Christ. He was one of the greatest of the preachers and missionaries of the eighteenth-century Church, and one of the most dynamic opponents of the dangerous heresies of Jansenism and Calvinism. The antidote to this insidious poison—a corruption spreading from within Christianity itself—was not only St. Margaret Mary's revelations of devotion to the Sacred Heart, but also de Montfort's teaching on devotion to Mary.

When the spirituality of Louis Marie de Montfort is seen in its true perspective, his life can be appreciated for what it was—the life of "the herald . . . of the reign of God through Mary" [*Address of His Eminence Frederico Cardinal Tedeschini, after unveiling the statue of St. Louis Marie in St. Peter's, Rome.*]

Louis was the eldest of the eight children of John Baptist Grignon, and was born on the last day of January, 1673, in the little town of Montfort-la-Canne. At Confirmation he added the name of Mary, and later substituted Montfort, his birthplace, for his family name.

When he had completed his education at the Jesuit College in Rennes, he went to Paris at the age of twenty to prepare for the priesthood. Lack of means prevented him from gaining admittance to the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and he became a student under Abbe de la Barmondiere. When the Abbe died, he was left in even more destitute circumstances, and joined a community of ecclesiastics who lived a life of Spartan discipline and extreme poverty.

POVERTY, SICKNESS

He and his fellow-students had “the pleasure of poisoning themselves” (as one of them wryly admitted) with wretched and poorly-cooked food. So primitive were the conditions under which they tried to study, work and pray, that Louis soon became seriously ill. (Not long before he had earned a small stipend by keeping watch over the parish dead, and had spent almost the entire night—three or four times a week—in study, spiritual reading and prayer.)

RECOVERY

In spite of the care that he received on his removal to hospital, his condition became rapidly worse, and there seemed no hope of survival. It was when he appeared to be on the verge of death that he calmly announced his complete recovery! Not long afterwards he began to improve, and was soon able to return to his studies. In the meantime, Providence had provided him with friends, whose generosity enabled him to be admitted to the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.

Even before his early training was completed he had gained a reputation for heroism, love of the Cross and love of Mary, and it was at this time that the Queen of Heaven began to claim him as her own.

“THE TREE OF LIFE”

Someone placed in his hands Boudon’s work on “Slavery to the Blessed Virgin” and immediately he sensed the important influence it was to be in his spiritual life. He soon began to share his enthusiasm with the other students, and from such a small seed the “Tree of Life” grew to its present incredible dimensions. As he wrote later: [“The Tree of Life—its culture and growth,” by St. Louis Marie de Montfort.]

“If you cultivate (Mary) the Tree of Life, freshly planted in your soul by the Holy Ghost, it will grow so tall that the birds of Heaven will come to dwell in it. It will be a good tree, yielding fruit of honour and grace in due season, namely the sweet and adorable Jesus, who always has been, and always will be, the only fruit of Mary.”

Louis Marie de Montfort was ordained priest on June 5th, 1700, and spent the entire day in thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament. His first Mass was celebrated in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the parish church of St. Sulpice. Not long before he had been one of two students chosen to make the annual pilgrimage to a Marian shrine, and at Chartres had placed his future work under the powerful protection of the Queen of Apostles; one of the most significant events of his early life.

As he had had previous experience and unexpected success giving catechetical instruction to the roughest of the Parisian children, he sought apostolic work which would call for strength and sacrifice—the total dedication that he was so eager to give.

HOME MISSIONS

So he applied for the dangerous and demanding Canadian missions, but his superiors refused the request, desiring that he should remain and dedicate himself to the home missions of France. Staying for a short time at Nantes with a priest-friend, who trained men for the home missions, he then continued to Poitiers—a place which, like Francis and Assisi, was destined to be inseparably associated with his name.

In the meantime, however, he had antagonized the Jansenists by his open opposition to their teaching. They held that Christ the Redeemer had shed his blood only for the predestinate, and that the conditions for the reception of the Sacraments (especially Penance and the Eucharist) should be as severe and exacting as possible.

THREAT OF JANSENISM

De Montfort's unfailing loyalty to Christ and His Church, his deep understanding of the immense love of God in the Incarnation and Redemption, made him a militant apostle of traditional theology against these subtle and dangerous innovations. The spirit of Jansenism had by this time eaten into the very vitals of Christianity, had penetrated monasteries,

seminaries and convents, so that the Church (especially in France) seemed in danger of being undermined from within.

“FRIENDS OF THE CROSS”

As part of his campaign against the teachings of Jansenism, de Montfort later founded an association of “Friends of the Cross,” so that Catholics would be encouraged to fight the evils of the time and make reparation to the Sacred Heart. His devotion to the Sacred Heart was inseparable from his devotion to Mary: these were the two powerful influences which were to pour oil into the wounds of a stricken Christianity and restore its vigour.

The formation of this lay association was an example of de Montfort’s instinctive response to the grave spiritual needs of his century. Like a good general, he sensed immediately where the battle-line of the Faith needed strengthening and, without fear or favour, used the most efficient means of meeting an assault. Nor could he be satisfied with anything less than complete victory. It was the Marian lay apostolate in eighteenth century France!

In a letter to the association he wrote:

“Christian perfection consists:

1. in willing to become a saint—‘If any man will come after Me’
2. in self denial—‘let him deny himself’
3. in suffering—‘let him take up his cross’
4. in doing—‘let him follow Me.’”

It was a programme he was to follow faithfully throughout his life. Not that he was a plaster saint—he was far too rugged and uncompromising for that—but the challenge of the Cross never found him without a response. It was a manliness and courage purified to white-heat in the fire of the Holy Spirit.

The old-world town of Poitiers, above the valley of the Clain, has been Christian since the Roman occupation of the country and is one of the earliest centres of Christianity in Europe. Its churches, in which saints such as Radegonde are venerated, date back to the seventh century, and it is

famous for one of the most ancient burial-grounds. Although the countryside was ravaged by wars and revolutions it was to welcome the Cistercians in the eighteenth century and—in its “second spring”—St. Madeline Sophie and her newly-formed Society of the Sacred Heart.

ARRIVAL AT. POITIERS

Even with his extraordinary insight into the future and his prophetic powers, it is unlikely that de Montfort, on his arrival at Poitiers, had any realization of the important part the city was to play in his life, and in the history of the congregations he was destined to found.

Yet his impact on its citizens was dramatic and immediate. Those who assisted at his Mass in the hospital at Poitiers called out to each other: “Here is a saint. Here is the man for us. Let us detain him and try to keep him.” They petitioned the Bishop to appoint him as their chaplain and the appointment was finally confirmed.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

De Montfort’s deep spirituality did not lessen his shrewdness, realism or masterly flair for organization. In this he resembles the great St. Teresa who, after being elevated to the heights of mystical prayer, could conclude an eminently satisfactory business arrangement on behalf of the Reform.

The hospital was in a chaotic state both medically and financially and only a saint would have had the patience and wisdom to overcome the disorders. Typically enough, he gave up his own salary to provide more revenue for the inmates, ate the same food as the poorest of them and gave any money donated to him to the necessities of the patients and the upkeep of their chapel. Not satisfied with this, he even tramped through the city begging assistance on behalf of the sick, so that he soon became a familiar sight—his donkey ambling beside him laden with gifts.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

What spare time he had left was entirely devoted to the needs of the patients, and no task was too menial for him—waiting at table, sweeping rooms, preparing beds, nursing those desperately ill, and ministering to the dying. It seemed as though this extraordinary man never slept and had the power of being everywhere he was wanted at the same time.

OPPOSITION

Unfortunately there is nothing like disinterested dedication to arouse jealousy and resentment, so that de Montfort's very success gained him enemies. Two of his persecutors—the superior of the institution and a member of its committee of management—did everything possible to obstruct and discredit him. This did not surprise him in the least for, as he dryly admitted in one of his letters: "I entered this poor hospital or rather this Babylon, with a firm resolution of bearing, in company with Jesus Christ my Master, the crosses which I well foresaw would certainly befall me if the work were from God."

PEACE FOLLOWS

In the midst of the turmoil created by this pair of trouble-makers there was a sudden and unexpected calm, for both of them became seriously ill and died within a short time of each other. Such was the impression these strange circumstances created that de Montfort was finally left in peace.

The Chaplain's work in the meantime had greatly increased but he somehow managed to extend it even further by preaching, catechizing and hearing confessions in many of the outlying parishes of Poitiers. It is difficult to imagine how he accomplished all this with such enthusiasm, yet he added the guidance of ecclesiastical students to his already incredible schedule.

It was -at this time that he was obliged to journey to Paris to arrange his sister's entry into a convent and during his three months' absence the hospital again lapsed into chaos, due to appalling inefficiency and neglect. Yet de Montfort not only remedied the disorder soon after his return, but

increased his missionary work in the churches of the city and carried on a large correspondence with those who continually sought his advice.

PERSECUTION FOLLOWS

As a tribute to his amazing success in bringing about the spiritual reformation of the city, he now began to experience the unwelcome attentions of “the prince of this world.” Diabolic phenomena (similar to that which tormented the Cure d’Ars) added trials and terrors by night to the persecution he was already suffering by day. For de Montfort, as a missionary, had rapidly become famous in Poitiers, and the malice of his enemies had received a new stimulus.

THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM

In his despair at getting any effective co-operation in the management of the hospital, he founded “the Daughters of Wisdom,” a new congregation of women. Several girls, from amongst the poorest citizens of Poitiers, were chosen as pioneers of the movement, even though some of them were blind, crippled or in uncertain health. De Montfort gathered them together in a room of the hospital which he named “La Sagess” and placed in it a large Cross as their source of inspiration.

The rule of life he gave them was a well-balanced one of prayer and activity. Although he foresaw that he would not live to witness the growth of the congregation, the knowledge that he had at least made a beginning gave him immense consolation. For he realized the important role it was to play in the life of the Church in later centuries, and was proud that the sick, the blind and the crippled had been the privileged ones summoned to the service of the King.

The bitter opposition to his work now became so serious and so dangerous that he felt compelled to resign his position.

A HOME MISSIONARY

Immediately the Bishop accepted his services as a home missionary and sent him to Montbernage, a suburb of Poitiers, notorious for its moral decay. Here de Montfort began in earnest his extraordinary career of apostolic activity. His methods were so modern in their approach that they alarmed and bewildered the more conventional clerics. Sometimes it would be the realistic portrayal, in dramatic form, of the truths of the Faith or the struggle of a soul to find salvation. Or it might be the burning of dangerous literature on a great pyre, surmounted by an effigy of the Devil as a society-woman! (The literature was not gathered by witch-hunts, but was brought voluntarily to the missionary by the repentant towns-people.)

What a scene this would make in the twentieth century (or the 21st)—a pile of the latest fashionable obscenities burnt outside the Cathedral with the effigy of a satanic society-woman on top of the pyre! It would immediately gain widespread publicity for the campaign for Christian literature by all the mass media of communication and would be worth a hundred sermons which was exactly the effect intended by de Montfort. But it takes rare courage to make such a gesture in any century.

MODERN MEANS

Louis Marie de Montfort is very much of our time, and would have used radio, TV, mass rallies and pilgrimages with daring, imagination and skill. He was never concerned about what “they” would think—whether powerful or pious—and went to any lengths of flamboyance to drive home his message. Yet the response was not ephemeral or simply emotional; it was solid and lasting, because it was a response to the message of his own crucified life.

The results of his missions were soon evident in the many churches restored, the pilgrimage centres established, the contributions given to the poor, and in the real spiritual renewal brought about in the dioceses he had visited.

OTHER PARISHES FOLLOW

Montbernage was only the first of many parishes, almost on the verge of ruin, which he re-vitalized with the fire of his zeal for the Kingdom of Christ. It was here, also, that he erected the first chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under her new title of “Queen of All Hearts.”

These activities were accompanied by an amazing gift of prophecy, such as his prediction of the recovery of the Governor’s wife when she seemed almost at the point of death.

Crowds flocked to his confessional and thronged to hear him whenever he preached. The situation could only rub salt into the wounds he had already inflicted on the Jansenists. Misrepresenting his work, they complained to the Bishop of Poitiers and de Montfort was peremptorily ordered to discontinue his ministry in the diocese.

PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

Without any attempt to justify himself, he accepted the curt dismissal with serenity. He even seemed glad of the opportunity it gave him of making a pilgrimage to Rome. For a long time he had wanted to obtain permission to volunteer for the missions overseas that he might offer his life for Christ. Martyrdom was never far from his hopes and desires although, in another form, he endured it daily.

Before leaving Poitiers, the scene of so many graces, he wrote a touching letter of farewell to his people, encouraging them to persevere. This message, so confident in the face of overwhelming adversities, was typical of the man:

THROUGH MARY

“It is through Mary,” he wrote “that I look for and shall find Jesus, that I shall crush the serpent’s head, and that I shall overcome my enemies and myself to the greater glory of God.”

On the same day he set out on his pilgrimage in the spirit of the Gospels, with only a Bible, a Crucifix, a Rosary, an image of Mary, and his staff. The

few coins he had he gave to the poor, trusting in God for his food and shelter.

It was a penitential pilgrimage of fasting, watching and prayer, and with only one pause along the way—that he might dedicate himself once more to Jesus through Mary at the Shrine of Loretto.

ROME AT LAST

At last the great dome of St. Peter's came into sight against the pale horizon and, taking off his shoes, de Montfort walked barefoot the two leagues that still separated him from Rome. There, after visiting the churches of the city and its places of pilgrimage, he sought an audience with Pope Clement XI.

On 6th June the request was granted and, for de Montfort, it was a momentous occasion. The Pope listened kindly to his enthusiastic plans for a missionary apostolate, and for the honour of being sent to a mission where he might shed his blood for the Faith. (The tenacious reformer of Poitiers was never a man for half measures!) He added that he would regard the Pope's decision as the will of God, and that he was ready to work in any part of the world to which he was sent.

MISSION IN FRANCE

The Pope's reply was swift and unexpected. Stretching out his hands in the direction of France, he said: "You have in your own country a field worthy of your zeal." He then explained the anxiety of the Holy See at the encroachments of Jansenism, which he had just explicitly condemned, and asked de Montfort to teach Christian Doctrine to the people, helping them to understand the spirit of Christianity by the renewal of their baptismal promises. Finally, he conferred on him the title of Missionary Apostolic.

Although dumbfounded at the Holy Father's unexpected decision, de Montfort now felt certain of his vocation to the home missions. It was a keen disappointment to him that, for the second time, the door had been firmly closed on his own plans for a martyr's death. Yet he was a man for whom God's Will was the supreme value, even when it meant the sacrifice

of his dearest desires. And if his longings for martyrdom could not be literally fulfilled, his enemies would try to provide him with its equivalent!

Little did they expect that the priest they had succeeded in removing from his diocese, and whose work they had so subtly undermined, would return as the chosen champion of the Holy See against their own teaching.

RETURN TO FRANCE

After a short rest and retreat, and a pilgrimage to some of the French Shrines, de Montfort offered his services to the Bishop of his home diocese. As several priests were just beginning a mission in the town of Dinan, the Bishop sent him to join them. This mission, and one for the soldiers of the garrison, proved to be successful beyond all expectations, and he was asked to preach throughout the neighbouring districts.

At this time a strange incident occurred in de Montfort's life, which we can understand only by recalling a prophecy made two and a half centuries before his birth.

OUR LADY OF PITY

St. Vincent Ferrer the great missionary of the Middle Ages and the apostle of Brittany, was then preaching at a place called La Cheze, near Loudeac, when he happened to notice a large, ancient, but deserted and roofless chapel, almost in ruins, and overgrown with briars and nettles. He paused in his sermon, and seemed deeply touched by the sight of the abandoned sanctuary, which was known as the Chapel of Our Lady of Pity. Then he began to tell the people what a joy it would be to him if he could restore it to the worship of God and the Honour of the Blessed Virgin.

Suddenly he seemed inspired by a vision of the future, and understood that this very work was destined to be accomplished by another missionary in centuries to come.

PROPHETIC VISION

Looking around him as one filled with the light of the Spirit of God, *St. Vincent* said; “This great undertaking is reserved by God for a man whom the Almighty will cause to be born in later times, a man who will come as one unknown; a man who will be greatly contradicted and laughed at; but a man, nevertheless, who will bring this holy enterprise to a happy issue.”

PROPHECY FULFILLED

There could be no truer portrayal of *Louis Marie de Montfort* who, in 1707, went to La Cheze, preached to the people there, and felt inspired by God to rebuild the ruined chapel of Our Lady of Pity. Although he had no resources for the project nor any hope of assistance, he set to work to raise money for the restoration of the shrine, and his efforts met with extraordinary success. The rapid completion of the sanctuary astonished the people of the district, who flocked in hundreds in procession for the opening ceremony.

A number of other incidents occurred which convinced them that de Montfort had miraculous powers—that he had multiplied bread to feed the poor, and had restored invalids to health. Their enthusiasm was so great, and their demands on the missionary so incessant that, when he left the city, de Montfort felt the need for a quiet retreat where he could renew his strength.

RETURNS TO HIS DIOCESE

So he retired to St. Lazare and, after a period of prayer and silence, took up his missionary work once more in his own diocese. Crowds filled the churches, and no one could keep count of the number of conversions. Sometimes de Montfort’s simple gesture of placing a crucifix before the assembled people, and asking them to venerate it, produced an amazing change even in indifferent and hostile congregations. There are those who would dismiss it as mass hysteria, but the incredible influence of the man on his contemporaries cannot be so lightly explained.

He had no pulpit oratory to win the admiration of the crowds, and always spoke of the fundamentals of the faith in the most straightforward terms.

Frequently he simply recited the 15 decades of the Rosary with the people, and then gave them the Crucifix to kiss. Yet the results of his missions were astounding, and the conversions made proved, in most cases, solid and lasting. Again there is a modern touch—he composed some 160 poems, and a number of rousing hymns, using many of them as a simple and effective means of instruction. Even in the years of revolutionary France, these were to keep a flame of Christianity alive in the hearts of the people. His own nuns chanted one of these hymns as they travelled in the tumbrels to the guillotine, so that even the depraved mob felt strangely moved and clamoured for their release.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

He was one of the earliest preachers to recognize the significance of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to use its message in the struggle against Jansenism. By this means and by encouraging devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady, he restored a well-balanced Christianity to areas which for years had withered in the clutches of harsh and erroneous doctrines. During every mission, an act of public reparation was made to the Blessed Sacrament, and the success of the mission left in the hands of Mary.

APOSTLE OF MARY

“The love of Mary” said one of his fellow-missioners, “seemed to have been born with him.” And it is as the Apostle of Mary that he is mainly remembered, for we have seen the fruits of his treatise on “The True Devotion” in the miraculous growth of the Legion of Mary. This book, which de Montfort predicted would be “enveloped in the silence of a coffer” was not discovered until 1842, 126 years after his death. The inspiration it has given to the Marian lay apostolate amply fulfils de Montfort’s prophecy that * *“in those latter times, God will raise up mighty saints, servants, slaves and children of Mary . . . who shall kindle the fire of divine love everywhere . . . like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful Mary to pierce her enemies.”* [* “True Devotion,” by St. Louis de Montfort.]

TRUE DEVOTION

“True Devotion” has always borne the stigma of “Marian exaggeration” but it is interesting to recall that, when De. Pusey pressed this accusation, the champion of de Montfort’s teaching proved to be no less a figure than the learned and saintly Cardinal Newman. Probably St. Louis Marie would not state his teaching today in the same theological terms, but he would insist on the same profound relationship between Mary and each member of the Church.

DIOCESE OF NANTES

De Montfort continued to work fruitfully in his native diocese until harried by the Jansenists and forced to leave. He then offered his services to the great diocese of Nantes, and his missions there met with the same remarkable response. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of the crowds, he decided to erect an immense Calvary which, rising from the vast plain that surrounds Pontchateau, would be visible for miles around. It was to be a centre of pilgrimage, and a perpetual reminder of the promises the people of the district had made to God during the mission.

The project was greeted with joy, and 500 labourers immediately volunteered. Soon the work was completed and proved its worth, not only by continuing to stimulate local devotion, but by drawing crowds from other areas—hundreds of people who found here the inspiration for the reformation of their lives. Once again de Montfort showed that he understood and respected the need men have of finding God through the windows of the senses—through what is tangible, moving and essentially human.

OPPOSITION BY JANSENISTS

A mass pilgrimage was arranged for the opening ceremony, and the hidden power of the Jansenists in clerical circles is indicated by the fact that they managed to get it cancelled the night before. (The feast-day chosen for the event was the Feast of the Holy Cross.)

They then spread the incredible story that the shrine was built as a fortress where de Montfort and his misguided followers could entrench themselves, threatening the law and order of France. Even more incredibly these accusations were believed, and the civil authorities demanded the destruction of the shrine. In spite of protests by the townspeople and their refusal to carry out the order, the work of demolition was brought about by force and, after three months, not a trace remained of the once famous Calvary. However, the townspeople had at least one consolation—they managed to detach the figure of Christ from the Cross before it could be desecrated or destroyed.

De Montfort received this public humiliation with his usual calm. He even foretold that a new Calvary would rise again on the site of the old one. This prediction was finally fulfilled in 1825, when a crowd of 20,000 pilgrims, bearing white standards, surrounded the hill and made a public act of reparation at the restored Calvary.

The missionary again retired to renew his spiritual strength, and made a retreat at the Jesuit house at Nantes. Before leaving the diocese, he personally led a courageous and heroic rescue of flood-bound householders, whose district had been inundated by the waters of the Loire.

THE DIOCESE OF LA ROCHELLE

Towards the end of March, 1711, he agreed to a request to give missions to the diocese of La Rochelle, where his work as a home missionary was destined to reach its most amazing climax. His preaching created such scenes of fervour and enthusiasm that he earned the bitter hatred of some of the Calvinists, who determined to assassinate him. When he arrived at the street they had chosen for the attempt, he felt compelled, without understanding why, to retrace his steps and take a long detour to his destination. “My heart became as cold as ice” he told a companion, “and I could not take a step forward.”

This was not his only escape from death. An attempt was later made to poison him and, although he survived the dose, his system became so

weakened that he suffered its effects for the rest of his life.

PASTORAL WORK CONTINUES

These persecutions formed a dark background to the increasing brilliance of his pastoral success. Jansenists, Calvinists, even pirates (who unsuccessfully tried to capture him while en route to a mission at the Isle-Dieu) could only interrupt, but never stop, the mighty tide of graces that seemed to accompany his work everywhere, and particularly at La Rochelle. Here the accounts of cures, miracles and conversions remind one of the days of the early Church. While due allowance must be made for exaggerated enthusiasm, it is still an extraordinary record of pastoral activity—one which gives increasing evidence of the sanctity of this untiring and courageous man.

THE DE MONTFORT FATHERS

Realizing that he had little time left on earth, he now began to organize a society of priests to continue his work. The rule of life he drew up was approved and he chose, from the community of St. Esprit, a seminarian who was later destined to be the first member of the Company of Mary to work with him—Pere Vatel. The new society known as the De Montfort Fathers was soon to become one of the most enterprising of the missionary congregations, making foundations in many countries of Europe, Asia and America.

THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM AGAIN.

De Montfort, with his usual thoroughness and dedication, also completed his plans for the Daughters of Wisdom, and selected as their Superior Mme. Trichet, afterwards known as Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus. As the saint predicted, the nuns were given the administration of the hospital at Poitiers, where the congregation had been founded, and later became equally famous not only in other cities of Europe, but also in missionary countries throughout the world.

A severe illness from which de Montfort suffered in 1713 was treated by the barbarous methods of the time, and his survival of the ordeal seemed almost miraculous. His cheerfulness during these operations, performed without anaesthetics, was only an expression of the spirit of penance which had characterized his whole life. At this time he told a priest friend that “God had favoured him with a very special grace, which was the abiding presence of Jesus and Mary in the depth of his soul.” He did not attempt to explain it theologically, and it is doubtful if he could have done so. It seemed a wholly mystical experience of his union with Jesus, through Mary, which had been the inspiration of his life and apostolate.

He was destined now for a final glorious spring of missionary activity—preaching and praying the rosary in churches, shrines and streets, and even in the midst of a ribald crowd aboard a market boat. He established innumerable Rosary Confraternities; and it was his great love for the rosary which led him to become a Dominican Tertiary.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

In spite of ridicule and opposition, his work grew to immense proportions and had a lasting effect on the French Church. As an example of the fruits of his missions, the Cure of Saint-Lo testified that many of his parishioners still practised the devotions they had learned at these missions 60 years after the saint’s death!

Yet not content with this prodigious activity, he established hospitals and schools, and still had time and energy for the foundation of the Company of Mary, the Daughters of Wisdom, and the Association of the Friends of the Cross.

The once-Calvinist stronghold of La Rochelle was to be the crown of his missionary achievements, and it was there that he was revered as another Saint Paul. He was besieged at all hours, by people from all classes of society, seeking spiritual advice; and many of his visitors claimed to have seen his face transfigured. This occurred publicly as he was preaching in the Dominican church on the glories of Mary on the Feast of the Purification.

The phenomena of levitation has also been recorded, although de Montfort took every precaution to avoid discovery. So great were the crowds that flocked to hear him that, during one mission, the pulpit had to be placed in the open air at the foot of a large tree.

HIS DEATH APPROACHES

In January, 1716, he resumed his missionary work in the neighbouring parishes, and it seemed that he was at the peak of his powers, spiritually and physically, but it was at this very time that he foretold his own death, which he said would occur before the end of the year. His last project, and perhaps the one dearest to his heart, was the organization of a mass pilgrimage to the Shrine of Notre Dame des Ardilliers to obtain the blessing of the Queen of Heaven on the new Company of Mary, and its future work. Pere Vatel and Pere Mulet, destined to be the first two priests of the Company, led the pilgrimage. Having followed in their steps to the Shrine, in spite of the ill-health which now became painfully obvious, de Montfort resumed his missionary work at Saint-Laurent-sur-Seine. He had left the future of his two congregations in Mary's hands, and felt his work on earth had at last been completed.

During the month of April, 1716, as the missionaries were preparing for a visitation by the Bishop of La Rochelle, de Montfort suddenly collapsed. Although he was gravely ill, he managed to preach a last sermon on the Compassion of Jesus. Those who heard him (with no realization of the gravity of his condition) remarked that he seemed to be delivering a farewell message to his people.

HIS FINAL MESSAGE

It is significant that his final sermon should have been on this very subject—the Mercy, Compassion and loving-kindness of Christ. It was the rock of his teaching against which the bitter fury of his enemies beat in vain, just as that same fury had lashed aimlessly against the rock of Peter.

But his victory could only lead to his crucifixion in the cause of Christ.

It was largely due to the labours of de Montfort, and his fellow-missionaries, that the influence of false doctrines in the French Church was finally overcome. And through the intercession of a Woman “fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array,” (Song of Songs 6: 10), the Spirit of Truth renewed and vivified the heart of Christian Europe.

HE RECEIVES THE LAST SACRAMENTS

After his farewell sermons, de Montfort was obliged to admit the seriousness of his illness. He received the Last Sacraments, expressed the wish to die as he had lived—a slave of Jesus and Mary. Even at this moment he was not granted peace or privacy, and the room in which he lay was soon crowded with people, begging his blessing. It is typical of him that he cheerfully obliged, even adding a few words of consolation and trying heroically to join them in a song. The effort was too much and he lapsed into unconsciousness. His last words were the names of Jesus and Mary, an expression of his confidence in their power against the forces of evil, and the joyful announcement that he had “finished his course—it is over now, and I shall never sin again.”

HE DIES, HIS WORK LIVES ON

It was eight o'clock on the evening of 28 April, 1716, and he was 43 years old. (After his canonization in 1947, this date was chosen as his feast-day.) But this was only the beginning of his work, for it was continued by the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom and, in spite of persecution, the de Montfort Fathers (as they later became known) gave 430 missions in the 63 years before the French Revolution. The reformation they brought about in France was similar to that achieved in Italy, at the same period, by the Redemptorists. Soon their apostolate was to find a fruitful harvest-field in several continents.

The Daughters of Wisdom are now numbered in thousands, and have foundations throughout the world devoted to charitable activities.

THE LEGION OF MARY

The latest developments of de Montfort's apostolate have been in our own 20th century—the foundation of the Priests of Mary and the Legion of Mary. The association of the Priests of Mary is dedicated to the preaching and practice of the “True Devotion.” The Legion of Mary is one of the most flourishing organizations of the lay apostolate, and is based on the teachings of the saint adapted and brilliantly applied to the spiritual needs of our own 20th and 21st century by Frank Duff.

The Confraternity of Mary, Queen of All Hearts, was first established in Canada, and canonically erected in 1913. It is another manifestation of de Montfort's spiritual influence on the interior life of Christians in our time. Its object is “to establish within us the Reign of Mary as a means of establishing more perfectly the reign of Jesus Christ in our souls.”

Yet perhaps it is in the apostolate of the Legion of Mary that we can best see the genius of de Montfort in action in this 20th century, effecting a reformation as powerful, and inspiring martyrdoms as heroic and as fruitful as in eighteenth century France. Legionaries are surely in the vanguard of those whom the saint foretold would transform Christian society in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ through His Blessed Mother.

PAPAL COMMENDATION

In spite of criticism of “True Devotion,” it should be remembered that six Popes [*to 1965,*] have recommended it, while Leo XIII renewed the Act of Consecration on his deathbed, and St. Pius X both practised the devotion and granted the Apostolic Benediction to all who would read the treatise.

The number of interior transformations it has encouraged and inspired cannot be calculated, but the Confraternity alone numbers several hundred thousand members throughout the world.

Devotion to Mary is the royal highway to the establishment of Christ's Kingship for, as de Montfort assures us:

“Our union with Jesus always and necessarily follows our union with Mary, because the spirit of Mary is the spirit of Jesus. When we have once found Mary, and through Mary, Jesus, and through Jesus, God the Father, we have found all good.” *

[* “How Mary forms Jesus in us,” from “The Secret of Mary.”]

Perhaps we could re-read his last great prophecy in the light of the spiritual transformation the Marian apostolate has brought about in the present [20th] century: *

“Through Mary God came into the world the first time. . . . may we not say that it is through Mary also that He will come the second time, as the whole Church expects Him, to rule everywhere and to judge the living and the dead?”

[* ‘Fruits of this devotion,’ from “The Secret of Mary.”]

As most of us are not theologians, we do not have to construct speculative theological systems about Mary. For if we *live* the total consecration to Mary, as Montfort did, we have the words of St. Pius X as our light and encouragement:

“Who does not know that there is no more certain and easy way than Mary to unite all with Christ and to attain through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God?” *

[* “Ad diem illum.” February 2nd, 1904.]

THE CHURCH TODAY

But what of the Church today? What is the mind of Pope Paul VI? The best answer to these questions is the following extract from the second part of the Holy Father’s Encyclical Letter: “Ecclesiam Suam”:

“This vision of humble and profound perfection leads our thoughts to Mary most holy, for she reflects the vision most perfectly and wonderfully in herself; she lived it on earth and now in heaven she rejoices in its glory and beatitude. Devotion to Mary is happily flourishing in the Church today; and we, on this occasion, gladly turn our thoughts to her to admire in the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Christ (and, therefore, the Mother of God and the mother of us) the model of Christian perfection, the mirror of true virtues, the pride of true humanity.”

“We regard devotion to Mary as a source of Gospel teaching. In our pilgrimage to the Holy Land we wished to learn the lesson of real Christianity from her, the most blessed, loveable, humble and immaculate creature, whose privilege it was to give to the Word of God human flesh in its

pristine and innocent beauty. To her now we turn our imploring gaze as to a loving mistress of life, while we discuss with you, venerable brethren, the spiritual and moral regeneration of the life of Holy Church.”

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

As though to confirm these words the Holy Father, in his address at the solemn closing of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council, proclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary “*Mother of the Church.*” He said:

“Thus to the glory of the Virgin and to our own comfort we proclaim the Most Holy Mary as Mother of the Church—that is, of all the people of God, as much of the faithful as of the pastors, she whom we call the Most Loved Mother.”

“And we wish that with such a sweet title the Virgin shall from now on be still more honoured and invoked by all the Christian people.”

Later that same day—the Feast of Our Lady’s Presentation- he visited the basilica of St. Mary Major and prayed before the ancient image of Mary “Salvation of the Roman People.”

While the Pope’s action implied no new dogma or doctrine, it was evident that his proclamation would add to Catholic devotion to Mary.

It was especially welcomed in Australia, for the title was already familiar and dear to Catholics in this country. At the twenty-eighth International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney in 1928, it had been used by Rev. Stanislaus Hogan, O.P., as the most appropriate description of Mary’s maternal relationship with the Mystical Body of her Son.

And throughout the Christian world the proclamation was greeted with joy and gratitude, for it is in Mary’s powerful intercession that her children have placed their confidence for the ultimate success of the Council, the reunion of Christians, and the salvation of mankind.

Nihil Obstat:

BERNARD O’CONNOR,
Diocesan Censor.

Imprimatur:
+ JUSTIN D. SIMONDS,
Archiepiscopus Melburnensis.
30th March, 1965.

ILLUSTRATIONS



ILLUSTRATION 1



ILLUSTRATION 2



ILLUSTRATION 3

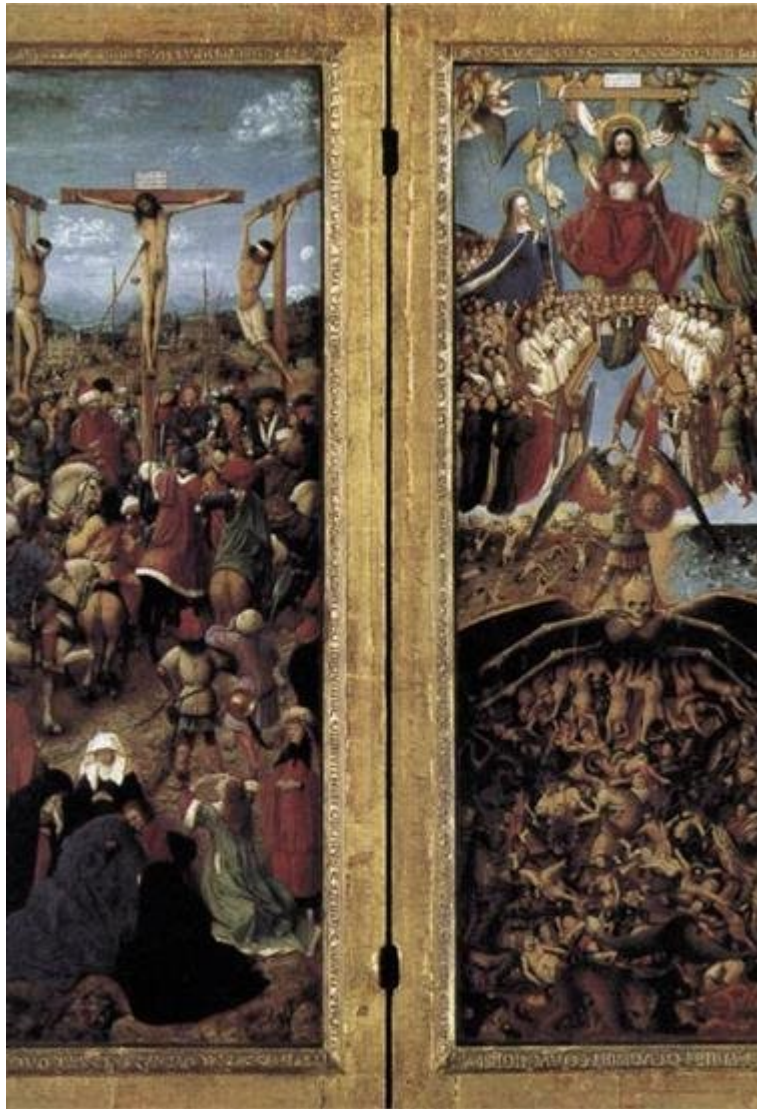


ILLUSTRATION 4



ILLUSTRATION 5



ILLUSTRATION 6



ILLUSTRATION 7



ILLUSTRATION 8

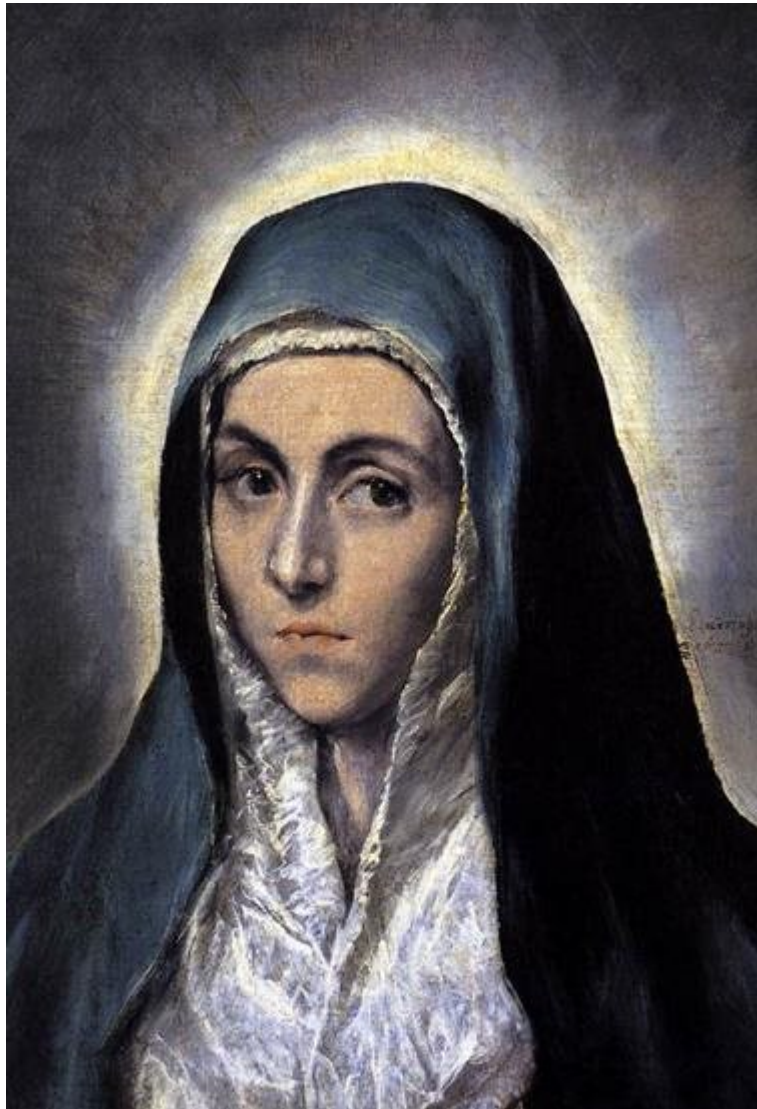


ILLUSTRATION 9



ILLUSTRATION 10

ENDNOTES

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY: WITH PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION

¹ See *Vie de Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort* (Le Clerc, Paris, 1839); also the Jesuit Father Clorivière's Life of him, 1785. Grandet's Life of him (1724), as well as Bastide's memoirs of fifty missions given with the servant of God, I only know by the quotations in the Life of 1839.

² The manuscript has been examined at Rome; recognised to be the work of the venerable servant of God; most minutely examined in its doctrine; and declared to be exempt from all error which could be a bar to his canonisation. [Editor's note: He has been canonized by Pius XII in 1947 and is now recognised as Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort by the Catholic Church]

³ See note farther on.

⁴ Boudon says, in his *Saint Esclavage*, that the English Catholics were remarkable for this devotion in the seventeenth century.—F. W. F.

⁵ *Note from the French.* It may be thought that, since the time of the venerable servant of God, certain decrees of the Congregation of the Index have absolutely condemned this usage; but whatever may be the precise extent of the prohibition intended by these decrees, there seems to be nothing in them formally interdicting the using of little chains to *private persons*. We may see at the end of Collet's Life of Boudon the remarks of that theologian, justifying the pious Archdeacon of Evreux from the criticisms of which he was the object, by the occasion of his treatise *Le saint Esclavage de la Sainte Vierge*. He cites the decrees which he read in the edition of the Index of 1758, and which have been repeated in the subsequent editions. The words of the Index are as follows:

“Prohibentur imagines, numismata insculpta pro confraternitatibus mancipiorum Matris Dei, italice schiavi della Madre di Dio, sodales catenatos exprimentia. Item libelli in quibus eisdem confraternitatibus regulæ præscribentur. Confraternitates autem quæ catenulas distribuunt confratribus et consororibus, brachiis et collo circumponendas atque gestandas, ut eo signo beatissimæ Virgini mancipatos se esse profiteantur, et quarum institutum in eo mancipatu præcipuè versatur, damnantur et exstinguuntur. Societatibus verò quæ ritum aliquem aut quodcumque aliud ad mancipatum ejusmodi pertinens adhibent, præcipitur ut id statim rejiciant” (Index, Decreta generalia, § 3, n. 3).

⁶ Boudon says, in his *Saint Esclavage*, that the English Catholics were remarkable for this devotion in the seventeenth century.—F. W. F.

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

⁷ The holy slavery of Jesus in Mary was known, no doubt, before St. Louis De Montfort's time; yet he rightly calls this devotion *a secret*: first, because there lies in it, as in all things supernatural, a hidden treasure which grace alone can help us to find and utilize; secondly, because there are but few souls that enter into the spirit of this devotion and go beyond its exterior practices. Again, as no one had as yet thoroughly explained this devotion nor shaped it into a definite method of spiritual life, St. Louis De Montfort could say of a truth, "I have not been able to find this secret in any book, old or new."

⁸ These words show how highly St. Louis De Montfort esteemed this devotion. As there are professional secrets committed only to men who know how to appreciate and exploit them, so this secret of sanctity must be entrusted only to such souls as truly concern themselves with their perfection; and following the recommendation of Our Lord not to profane holy things, De Montfort preserves this secret with a holy jealousy that denotes respect for Divine things.

⁹ "This solemn warning of the Saint is an application of the Parable of the Talents reported in Matthew 25. The unfaithful servant buried the talent he received and was condemned by the Master for his culpable negligence and for his disdain for the gifts of God. It is also a condemnation of the passivity or inertia taught by the false spirituality of Quietism or semi-Quietism that existed in St. De Montfort's time and that was condemned by Rome. The Saint does not mean that one is obliged to follow his plan of spiritual life in order to be saved, for in his *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary*, which is a development of the *Secret of Mary*, he explicitly says that we can attain Divine union by other roads, but that his method is an EASY, SHORT, PERFECT and SECURE WAY that leads us to union with Our Lord."

¹⁰ These words contain three important counsels: 1) This devotion must be practiced in the ordinary course of life as well as in the most important actions. 2) Only when we steadily persevere in it, and not merely try it for a few weeks, shall we be able to judge of its excellence and know its fruit. 3) It is necessary to remove all hindrances to this devotion, namely, sin and secret affection for that which is sinful.

¹¹ [Ave Maris Stella](#)

¹² [Veni Creator.](#)

¹³ Let us not make light of this recommendation. It is an important one. If many persons do not become acquainted with the secret of this devotion, it is because they forget that in order to be allowed to enter this "Garden Enclosed," as Mary is called, they must entreat the Holy Ghost, "Who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God", to grant them that favor.

¹⁴ Those who begin this devotion are here reminded of the recommendation of the masters of the spiritual life, namely, that the interior life must be their chief concern. They must be determined to obtain good results bought with the price of sacrifice. Compare these words with St. Louis De Montfort's advice on cultivating.

¹⁵ This is characteristic of St. Louis De Montfort's devotion and makes it a special method of spiritual life.

¹⁶ The reasons given here to prove that Mary is the most perfect means for finding Jesus are a condensed treatise on Mariology. If the faithful meditate on these points, they will come to understand the function assigned to Our Lady, by virtue of her Divine maternity, in the mystery of the Incarnation and now in the whole Church.

¹⁷ Conclude from this that we call Mary our Mother not because of mere feelings of piety and gratitude awakened in us by the conviction that she loves and protects us, but because she is our Mother in the spiritual order as truly as she is the Mother of Christ in the natural order. The spiritual motherhood of Mary, a consequence of her Divine motherhood, is one of the truths on which the True Devotion of St. Louis De Montfort is founded.

¹⁸ This abode of Mary in our soul may be explained in the following manner: Her presence in us cannot be compared to that of God living in our soul by Sanctifying Grace and thus making us partakers of His Divine life. Neither must we believe that Mary is bodily present in our soul. Some have wrongfully charged St. Louis De Montfort with inferring the omnipresence of Mary. But let us bear in mind Mary's privilege of being truly the Mother of God. As a consequence of that privilege, Mary beholds our souls in a universal manner and more excellently than the Saints and Angels do in their Heavenly glory, and she is with us really, individually, intimately. Thus, we are morally present to her, and she is morally present to us, because by her prayers, her attention and her influence she cooperates with the Holy Ghost in forming Jesus in our souls. By way of comparison, we might say that Mary is present in our souls as the sun is present in a room by its light and warmth, even though it is not there itself.

¹⁹ Therefore great docility is required on our part if we would be "formed quickly, easily and gently." This comparison of the mold explains very well the interior practice of this devotion. The devotion consists essentially in one single act which, under various forms and conditions, we apply to our whole life, both interior and exterior. Such is the simplicity of St. Louis De Montfort's method.

²⁰ This beautiful expression interprets the invitation of Divine Wisdom: "Come, eat the bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." It also accounts for the unexpected graces which this devotion draws upon those who persevere in its practice. Note that this method of spiritual formation is practically the same as the education given by a mother to her child. In ourselves we experience the infirmities and the wants of infancy, in Mary we find the strong and never wearied love of a mother. All that we have to do is to abandon ourselves to Mary and to remain dependent on her in all things, just like children.

²¹ St. Louis De Montfort has explained that his true devotion is an easy means of sanctification, yet he wishes to guard us against the common illusion that his method exempts us from spiritual labor and sufferings. He is himself a striking example of the manly education which Mary, the valiant

woman, gives to her children, as well as of the love of Jesus crucified which she enkindles in their hearts.

²² All such devotions, remarks St. Louis De Montfort elsewhere, include but a limited number of devout practices and take up but a part of our daily life, while the one he proposes embraces our whole life and divests us of all things.

²³ We must, therefore, note two things in this devotion: first, an *act* of total consecration to Jesus through Mary; and secondly, a *state* of being consecrated. That state consists in the permanent disposition of living and acting habitually in dependence on Mary; and that is called the spirit or the interior part of this consecration. This practice, although it embraces our entire life, appears so small and trifling at first glance, that St. Louis De Montfort has justly compared it to the mustard seed. But one comes to realize its vital energy and its wonderful effects when it has grown strong by persistent exercise.

²⁴ These words show us the far-reaching effect of this consecration, which St. Louis De Montfort calls a perfect renewal of the Baptismal vows; and, indeed, in making it we give ourselves anew to Jesus Christ, Our Lord, through the hands of Mary.

²⁵ It may not be amiss to give here a short explanation of the Heroic Act of Charity, and to point out in what it differs from this act of consecration.

According to a definition of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences , the Heroic Act of Charily consists in this: that a member of the Church Militant offers to God, for the souls in Purgatory, all the satisfactory works which he will perform during his lifetime and also all the suffrages which may accrue to him after his death.

By the Act of Consecration to Jesus through Mary as taught by St. Louis De Montfort, we give to Our Lady not only the satisfactory works of our life, but all else, nothing excepted. The use to be made of our good works and satisfactions is not determined by us, as it is in the Heroic Act, but it is left to Mary's intention and will. In his Act of Consecration, St. Louis De Montfort does not seem to comprise directly the suffrages which may accrue to us in Purgatory, but indirectly they are implied: "I leave to thee . . . all that belongs to me . . . in time and in eternity."

Neither the Heroic Act nor our Act of Consecration implies a vow, yet both may be made with a vow, if discretion and sound judgment are not lacking in making such a solemn promise to God.

²⁶ These words show us the true nature of this consecration. By making it we place ourselves in a state in which we are owned by Jesus and Mary and are totally dependent on Their will. Now that is the nature and the condition of a slave. But to remove the idea of there being any degradation or tyrannical violence in this noble servitude, St. Louis De Montfort explains that it is a voluntary slavery, full of honor and of love, giving us the liberty of the true children of God.

There is then no reason for being scared or repelled by the words "slave" and "slavery." Consider the *state*, not the *word* which expresses the state of total, of lasting and disinterested subjection and dependence on the Master through the Mother. One may ask why not use other words? It is because there are none to express adequately this special state of consecration.

²⁷ This charming comment on the words of St. Bernard will console and encourage certain souls who grow weary and sad when they become conscious of their unworthiness and their insufficiency. As St. Louis De Montfort loves to say, and his saying is very true, Mary will be “their supplement” with God.

²⁸ These words ought to be considered by all who are concerned about their perseverance in grace and their interior perfection. Many there are who hesitate even to begin and many who draw back soon after starting, because they apprehend a possible failure or lack of perseverance.

²⁹ St. Bernard, *Inter flores*, cap. 135, *de Maria Virgine*.

³⁰ A Dominican nun who died in the odor of sanctity in the year 1634 at the convent of Langeac in Auvergne, France.

³¹ From these indications, however abstract, we may learn that the act of union with Mary, as understood by St. Louis De Montfort, requires two things in the work of our sanctification: 1) the removal of all obstacles by renouncing ourselves; 2) the union of our will with the will of God and of our actions with the impulse of Divine grace. Without that self-renunciation in all things, our union with Mary would be very imperfect, our dependence on her would be an illusion. Note also, that by telling us to renounce our own views and intentions, however good they be, in order to adopt those of Mary, De Montfort counsels the practice of that which is most perfect.

³² It indicates an indwelling, an intimate union which produces unity. As St. Louis De Montfort expresses it, we must “enter into Mary’s interior and stay there, adopting her views and feelings.” Mary must become, as it were, the place and the atmosphere in which we live; her influence must penetrate us. As soon as this disposition of our soul has become habitual, we can say that we dwell in Mary, and having thus become as one moral person with her, we abide in her and she dwells in us, in the sense explained above.

³³ St. Teresa gives similar advice to beginners for keeping recollected and united with Our Lord when at prayer. She recommends the use of images, and in this she is of the same mind as St. Louis De Montfort, who had recourse to images and banners, to the erection of calvaries and of other exterior displays that appeal to the senses and elevate the soul to God.

³⁴ This does not mean that we may not approach Our Lord directly to speak to Him in prayer or contemplation; nor does it mean that in every action of ours we must think of Mary actually and distinctly; a virtual intention is sufficient. St. Louis De Montfort, indeed, says that our offering or act of consecration, if renewed but once a month or once a week, does not establish us in the spirit of this devotion, which is a state or a habit; yet he remarks that our interior look toward Mary, though it be but a general and hasty look, is sufficient to renew our offering.

³⁵ Useful advice to those who are but beginning and who might think that they do nothing good because they do not see or feel. St. Louis De Montfort reminds them of the truth that our union with God consists in an act of the will. In his *True Devotion* he says that that act may be either mental or expressed in words; it can be made in the twinkling of an eye. In his prayer to Mary, he makes us ask for detachment of the senses in our devotion.

³⁶ This interior presence of Mary is a favor St. Louis De Montfort enjoyed in an exceptional degree, as we may see by reading his life. He says: “It is a grace not given to all.” Yet he exhorts us all to practice his true devotion and promises to all without exception “that Mary’s soul will be in them.” It is true, he always insists upon the condition of perseverance in practicing this devotion. As there are, however, but few souls who remain faithful to its spirit, even in a lower degree, we must say that this presence of Mary is not given to all.

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

³⁷ See “Tenth Rose,” for some of his sources.

³⁸ It is estimated that he enrolled over 100,000 persons in the Rosary Confraternity. (Le Crom, S.M.M. “St. L-M. de Montfort” Ch. XV, p. 311.)

³⁹ F. M. William. *The Rosary: Its History and Meaning*, Benziger Bros., 1952, p. 115.

⁴⁰ Acts 1:1.

⁴¹ Wisdom 2:8.

⁴² Peter 5:4.

⁴³ *De Dignitate Psalterii*. The importance and Beauty of the Holy Rosary, by Blessed Alan de la Roche, O.P., French Dominican Father and Apostle of the Holy Rosary.

⁴⁴ We have omitted the Latin quotations so as to not encumber the text. English translations have been given above.

⁴⁵ 1 Cor. 13:7.

⁴⁶ Heb. 11:6.

⁴⁷ Saint Peter of Verona, O.P. 1206–1253, was a Dominican priest who fought heresy courageously and zealously. He had the honor of receiving the habit from the hands of Saint Dominic himself. He was appointed Inquisitor for Lombardy, and it was in discharging his duties that he gave his life for the Faith.

⁴⁸ From the Pange Lingua.

⁴⁹ Exodus 3:14.

⁵⁰ Ps. 143:9.

⁵¹ Prov. 8:17, 21.

⁵² Cor. 9:6.

⁵³ Luke 6:38.

⁵⁴ Ecclus. 3:5.

⁵⁵ “. . . the word divine may be used without attributing the nature of Divinity to the person or thing thus qualified. We speak of our own prayers, whether addressed to God or to His Saints, as a divine service. The Psalmist speaks of us all as being gods and sons of the Most High; and yet no one takes offense, because the sense given to the words uttered is understood. Mary may be called divine because Divinely chosen for the divine office of Mother of a Divine Person, Jesus Christ (Cardinal Vaughan, preface to “True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” by St. Louis de Montfort).”

⁵⁶ The “Gloria Patri” was a happy innovation in the recitation of the Rosary. It is quite probably that it can be attributed to Saint Louis de Montfort himself.

⁵⁷ Eph. 5:1.

⁵⁸ Matt. 25:12.

⁵⁹ Saint Mary Magdalene, according to a tradition, spent the last thirty years of her life in Provence, at a place subsequently called Sainte Baume (“the Holy Ointment”). Pilgrims go to the Dominican Church of Sainte Baume to venerate the relic of her head which is preserved there. (Catholic Encyclopaedia.) M.B.

⁶⁰ Quietism and Illuminism were heresies of Saint Louis’ day. Adherents of the former school and also those of the latter had an exaggerated idea of Divine inspiration and denied the necessity of individual effort in the spiritual life. Madame Guillon was the chief exponent of Quietism in France. M.D.

⁶¹ Matt. 6:9.

⁶² This is a devotion that originated in the very early Church; it consists in visiting certain stational churches in Rome and saying prescribed prayers in each one. This practice was usually penitential (Catholic Encyclopedia) M.D.

⁶³ Cf. Philipp. 3:8.

⁶⁴ 3 Kings 10:8.

⁶⁵ John 17:3.

⁶⁶ Cf. 1 Peter 4:1.

⁶⁷ Eph. 6:11.

⁶⁸ Leo XIII modified this list of indulgences. We give it here because it is included in Saint Louis’ manuscript.

Today the Indulgences for Confraternity members are:

(1) For members of the Rosary Confraternity, a plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions, is granted:

a. on the day of enrollment. (When application is made, a certificate of membership is sent, indicating the day of the enrollment.)

b. on the following feast days: Christmas, Easter, Annunciation, Purification, Assumption, Our Lady of the Rosary, and Immaculate Conception.

(2) For those who pray the Rosary, a plenary indulgence is granted under the usual conditions, when the Rosary is prayed in Church, or in a Public Oratory, in a family (family Rosary), Religious Community, or Pious Association. Otherwise a partial indulgence is granted.

⁶⁹ The Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen) is sung in procession after Compline by the Fathers and Brothers in every Dominican monastery, and also by Dominican Sisters. This custom was started by St. Dominic . . . Since then other orders and congregations have adopted this practice. M. B.

⁷⁰ This incident is referred to by Saint Louis in his “True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” when he explains that those who love Our Lady are not lost. Cf. paragraph 42. M.B.

⁷¹ Eccl. 15:9.

⁷² Mark 7:6.

⁷³ Jeremias 28:10.

⁷⁴ Luke 16:10.

⁷⁵ St. Louis’ message fits in beautifully with that of the great “Family Rosary Crusade” of today. M.B.

⁷⁶ Luke 18:1.

⁷⁷ John 13:15.

⁷⁸ Luke 6:12.

⁷⁹ Matt. 26:41.

⁸⁰ 3 Kings 10:8.

⁸¹ Ps. 83:5.

⁸² Mark 11 :24.

⁸³ Matt. 8:13.

⁸⁴ James 1:5, 6.

⁸⁵ Luke 18:13.

⁸⁶ Luke 22:43.

⁸⁷ Isaias 54:1.

⁸⁸ Jeremias 2:13.

⁸⁹ John 16:24 and Matt. 7:7.

⁹⁰ Job 13:15.

⁹¹ Wisdom 7:14.

⁹² 3 Kings 19:7.

⁹³ Apoc. 3:11.

⁹⁴ Galat. 5:7.

⁹⁵ *Idem.* 5:7.

⁹⁶ Matt. 11:12.

⁹⁷ Ecclus. 2:1.

⁹⁸ Acts 17:18.

⁹⁹ Apoc. 2:10.

¹⁰⁰ This method varies slightly from that which is now well known. Saint Louis modified it during his lifetime, but it is given here because it is to be found in the original manuscript of this book.

The following prayer, revealed to the three children of Fatima by Our Lady of Fatima in 1917, is now added following the Glory be to the Father at the end of each decade:

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.